

THE LONDON READER

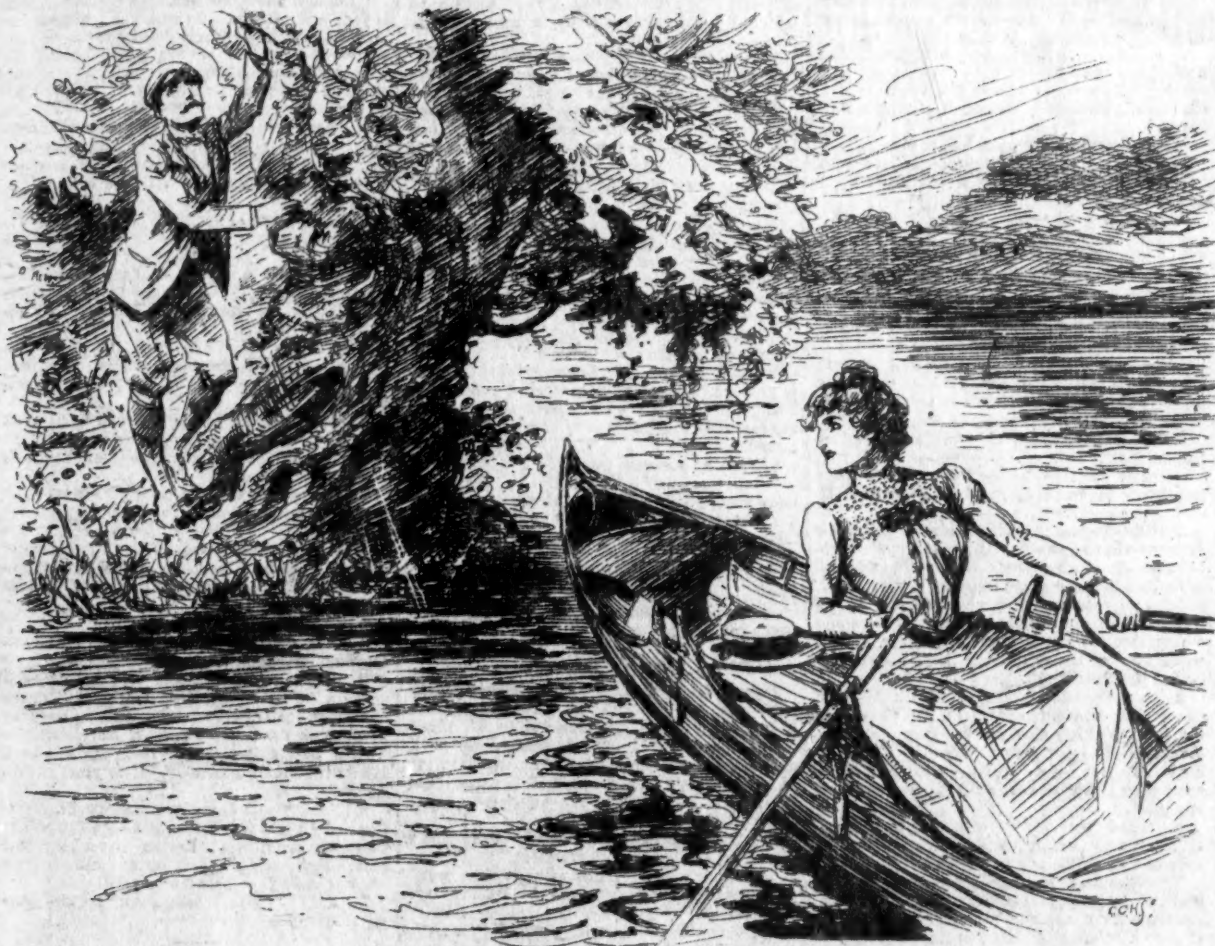
of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

No. 1860.—VOL. LXXVI.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 24, 1900.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



"I THINK I HAVE DISLOCATED MY ANKLE!" SAID THE YOUNG MAN

BY LOVE'S CONTROL.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

DAGMAR DANECOURT leaned against the stone parapet of her favourite terrace, and looked over the wide sweep of field and wood stretched out before her.

There was something wistful in the proud eyes, something sorrowful about the haughty mouth, and once or twice she sighed deeply.

This fair land, with its rich pastures, its woods and dells, was her heritage; but none knew better than she how frail was her hold upon it, how feeble her claim.

The Danecourts had fallen on evil days, and there was not an acre of field or garden, not a stone in the grand, grey pile that was not mortgaged.

From her earliest years Dagmar's pride of race had been fostered carefully, steadily, and she had been taught that it rested with her to build up the fallen fortunes of her house.

She was beautiful, with a beauty that took "man's breath away," and she knew it. She was not vain, but she had been taught the value of her charms; and it was impressed upon her that love was not a necessary adjunct to marriage, that money was the one supreme good. And whilst she hated herself for such a resolution, yet determined that at any cost she would save the home of her forefathers, and turn a deaf ear to the pleadings of her own heart.

She had gone through three seasons now and had had lovers in plenty, but none of them had possessed the necessary qualifications, and so had been summarily dismissed; and men began to be chary of singeing their wings at her flame.

She was twenty now, tall and perfectly formed. The proud head, reared so high, was crowned with auburn masses, which gleamed in the sun-

light like burnished gold; the brows were so dark as to be almost black, and from under them looked violet eyes, so sweet, so proud, that a man might well desire to see the love-light burning there for him. The face was oval, the mouth expressive, and not too small.

Sir Humphrey Danecourt might well exult in his daughter's beauty and grace.

With a gesture of weariness she lifted herself from her half-recumbent position, and began to walk with quick, impatient steps up and down the terrace.

On her left hand lay the stony road, along which the Danecourt dames had watched gay cavaliers pass and repass, and from which one maiden had witnessed a terrible fight, in which both lover and father had perished. But it was not of these things Dagmar thought as she paced to and fro. The loves and griefs of her ancestors were forgotten in the remembrance of her galling poverty, of the sacrifice she must make if she would keep her heritage.

The violet eyes turned in the direction of the

road. It had been roughly hewn up the hillside, and walking was not an easy performance. Most people approached The Towers by a more round-about way, and Dagmar knew by instinct whose figure it was tolling towards her, though as yet he was very distant.

It was like this man's dogged determination to scale the hill, to go out of his way to find and overcome obstacles, and sometimes this feature in her lover's character frightened her, for he was her lover, in spite of his age, his huge, ungainly figure, and stiff manners.

The violet eyes darkened, the proud face grew a shade prouder and colder as she stopped in her walk, and watched him as he came.

It was long time before he joined her, looking flushed and tired.

"Why did you not come by the other route?" she asked, disdainful to see his outstretched hand.

"This is nearer," he answered, stiffly.

"But much rougher walking. Do you wish to see papa, Mr. Cross? He is in the library, I believe."

"Thank you. I came to see you."

She made a slight curtsy, which was not without an element of mockery.

"I am honoured! Shall we go back to the house?"

"As you will. Miss Danecourt, when are you coming to The Cedars again? My sister complains that she is forgotten."

"You must ask papa. And pray inform Miss Cross that I am not good at forgetting my—friends," she said, after some slight hesitation.

All the while he kept his eyes fixed upon her mobile face; but, whether he admired her, whether he was provoked by her coldness, it was impossible to tell, his face was so impassive, his eyes so expressionless.

Certainly he was not a likely man to please the fancy or win the affection of a young and beautiful girl. He was hopelessly plain, stern-featured, with lack-lustre eyes, and iron-gray hair; and, added to this, he was fast nearing fifty; but he was well-born and wealthy. It was a common saying that Cuthbert Cross could buy up the whole town of Danecourt, and that his bank was safe as the Bank of England.

As he walked beside Dagmar, and looked into the proud, faintly-flushed face, he knew she did not love him, that he was even somewhat distasteful to her; but he knew, too, that he might have her for the asking—because of all he could give; and he was content to win her at any price.

He loved her madly, and without reason, although such was his strength of will that he gave no sign of his passion or pain.

Together they entered the house, Dagmar leading the way to the library, where a tall, stately-looking man was idly turning the pages of a book before him. He glanced up quickly as they entered, and something like triumph lit up his dark eyes.

"Come in, Cross. This is an unexpected pleasure. You will stay to luncheon, I hope?"

"Thank you. I will if I may carry you and Miss Danecourt home to dinner. Sarah will be pleased;" he turned to look for Dagmar, but she had already made good her escape to discuss with the cook the ways and means of providing a decent luncheon.

Then she once more left the house and wandered aimlessly about the gardens.

Her heart was heavy, her will seemed failing her. How could she give herself to this man? How could she link her life to him? It was too hard, too hard! And yet could she bear to lose The Towers, her own assured position, to go into the world penniless and friendless.

"I will not think of these things," she said at last. "They madden me," and turning with swift feet left the garden behind, and hurrying through a paddock crossed a stile and so came to a meadow, through which flowed a deep and tolerably wide stream.

A boat was moored to the bank, and stepping into it, Dagmar took the oars and shot out into the middle of the stream.

This was her favourite exercise, and soon her

thoughts took a brighter tinge, her heart grew lighter. The motion was so pleasant, the day so balmy, the scenery so fine, that she determined for this hour to be happy, and succeeded tolerably well.

Cuthbert Cross was almost forgotten, and nothing but the beauty of her now distant home dwelt in her memory.

She rowed until the clang of The Towers clock warned her it was time to return, and with a regretful sigh she bent once more to the oars.

On she went, swiftly now, and her face began to harden, her eyes to darken. She started with a little cry when a voice from the bank called to her.

"Stop, please. I beg your pardon, but will you give me a little assistance?" and turning her head, she saw a young man holding to a tree—a tall, broad-shouldered young fellow, with frank grey eyes, and yellowish-brown hair. His face was white as if with pain, but he smiled as he spoke, and his smile was pleasant to see.

Dagmar drew into the bank.

"What is it you want?" she asked, calmly, whilst the stranger was silent a moment, struck dumb by her wonderful beauty.

"I think I have dislocated my ankle; at all events I can't walk, and I've been waiting here more than an hour for some one to come along and play the good Samaritan."

"Where did it happen—the accident, I mean?" questioned Miss Danecourt.

"About a stone's throw from here. I called to you as you went up the river, but you did not hear; and as no one else came along I managed to drag myself as far as this, hoping you would return."

"What do you wish me to do?"

"Send someone to my assistance, if you will be so good. I dare say one of the servants up at the house yonder would be willing to 'help a lame dog over the stile,' for a consideration. Is there any inn where I could stop?"

"Yes, about half a mile lower down;" she paused a moment, then said, without any trace of shyness or coquetry, "I will row you there, if you can get into the boat and care to trust me. It will be better than waiting till other help comes."

He manfully attempted to reach her, but she saw by the compression of his pale lips how much he was enduring, and hastened to help him.

"Lean on me. I am very strong," she said, gravely; and by slow degrees contrived to get him to the boat. Then she took up her oars, blushing a little under the stranger's intent regard, his warm words of thanks.

"Let me do that," he said. "My ankle doesn't incapacitate me from rowing."

"Please sit still. I can manage very well," and seeing she was determined he let her have her way.

"I'd no idea," he said, presently, "such a little thing would throw me over. I trod on a loose stone, and before I could say 'Kulves!' over I went."

She glanced curiously at him. He looked a gentleman, and his voice was peculiarly pleasant and refined, and yet there was a wide contrast between his manner and that of the man she daily met. It was so frank and free, without bordering on familiarity or disrespect, and she was rather favourably impressed with this son of Anak.

"It is a pretty country about here," he went on, his keen grey eyes taking in every new form of beauty round; "and it has the merit of being entirely fresh to me. I only came over from Australia last week."

"You are a Colonel?" she asked, carelessly.

"Born and bred in Brisbane; but the governor is English to the backbone, and he was especially desirous I should visit the mother-land. He gave me quite a list of places I must see, and amongst them the house up yonder—The Towers—I think he called it. I was going up there when this accident occurred."

"It is not a show place," Dagmar said, very coldly. "I'm afraid your intention of seeing it will be frustrated."

He scarcely heeded the change in her manner as he answered lightly,—

"Oh! I always succeed when my heart is in the affair; and the governor seemed so particularly anxious I should see the place, I wouldn't like to disappoint him. At one time of his life he lived pretty near here I fancy."

Her eyes looked the question she would not ask.

"My name is Lennox," he said, understanding and replying to the look, "Frank Lennox; my father is Thomas Lennox."

"I do not know the name; Mr. Lennox, this is your inn. If you will excuse me I will call the landlord to your assistance," and stepping out she went swiftly up the bowling green towards the trim, white-washed house.

Frank Lennox concluded she must be a creature of some consequence as the burly landlord came out to her bowing profoundly, and listened deferentially to her rapid explanation. Then he summoned an ostler to his assistance, and together they lifted the young man from the boat. Then he paused,—

"Whom have I to thank?" he asked in his direct way. "And shall I not see you again?"

"I am Miss Danecourt of The Towers," she answered with cold rebuke, and bowing slightly, left him to the mercies of Boniface and his help.

"So that is Miss Danecourt," he said, when he had watched the boat out of sight and was being rather roughly propelled towards the inn.

"Yes, sir; she's a beautiful young lady; most as lovely as her mother was before her; and she can be pleasant spoken when she likes, but she's as proud as Lucifer!"

"Proud, eh? Of her beauty do you mean?"

"No; she don't seem to care about that, for she's out in all weathers; hail, rain, or sun, it's all one to her. But she's as proud as Lucifer of her name and her blue blood, sir; why, I believe she thinks England couldn't get along without the Danecourts."

"It is a powerful family, then, is it?"

"It was, sir; but they've fallen on bad times. Sir Humphrey and his daughter, they're as poor as church mice, though you wouldn't think it perhaps. They do say Miss Dagmar will marry Mr. Cross, the banker from Danecourt; but I say it will be a sin and a shame if she does; he's fifty if he's a day, and as uncouth as a bear. Mind the step, sir; hadn't I better send for the doctor?"

"I think you had, my ankle is swelling considerably; and just bring me a soda and brandy to steady my nerves. Let me have your best room—and I say, landlord, let me have a little of your society, or I shall soon behipped."

To all of which orders John Truffles gave strict attention.

CHAPTER II.

THE gentlemen were pacing up and down the terrace when Dagmar returned, Sir Humphrey looking a trifle vexed.

"You are very late, Dagmar," he said, and she answered carelessly,—

"I thought I should be; but I met with an adventure that delayed me considerably."

"What was that, Miss Danecourt? Or is it to remain a secret?"

"Oh, no! I've been playing a very amateurish Samaritan! Just below Farnford Pool I came upon a young man who had sprained his ankle, or something of the kind—he asked me to get assistance."

"My dear Dagmar!" ejaculated Sir Humphrey, agitated at the impertinence of such a request; but the young lady continued composedly.

"I represented to him that to get help would be to lose time, and in some way contrived to get him to the boat, and then rowed him down to John Truffles."

"Dagmar! Dagmar! What an outrage upon propriety!"

"I am above criticism," she answered, loftily.

whilst a look of pride a moment marred her face. "And he was a stranger."

"It was imprudent, very imprudent!" Mr. Cross announced coldly.

"He was a gentleman, as well as a stranger," was the response, and she led the way to the house, the gentlemen following slowly. At table the talk reverted to Dagmar's *protégé*, much to the annoyance of the banker.

"Did he tell you his name, my dear?" asked Sir Humphrey, with more interest than he usually displayed.

"Yes; he is Frank Lennox, an Australian, on a visit to England, and when the accident happened was on his way here, believing, I think, that this was a show place. I quickly undeceived him, but he clung to the idea that he could obtain an entrance."

"If he's a decent young fellow, I don't see any reasonable objection to it," said Sir Humphrey blandly. "It will be something for him to remember and take pride in all his life!"

"He seemed more anxious to please his father in the matter than himself," laughed Dagmar, "and says at one time Mr. Lennox lived near The Towers."

"He seems to have been very communicative," remarked Mr. Cross, showing his displeasure openly.

"He was," the girl answered, wickedly; "very, and particularly pleasant spoken. Really, papa, you ought to call upon him."

"Perhaps I will," he began, when the banker interrupted him in his slow, stiff way.

"You owe it to your position, Danecourt, to exercise great judgment in forming acquaintances or friendships; for anything you know to the contrary, this fellow may be the son of some rascally convict."

He knew well how to play upon this proud man's weakness, and whilst despising him for his over-weening pride, used it to gain his own ends. Sir Humphrey hesitated now, and Dagmar struck in.

"Supposing such to be the case, Mr. Cross, would you have the son suffer for his father's crime?"

"It is the way of the world, and we have Scriptural authority for it."

"I have heard that our common enemy can quote Scripture to his own advantage," she retorted, contemptuously, and turned her proud glance significantly upon him. But if she hurt him he gave no sign, his face was impassive as ever, his eyes as cold; and strange as it may seem her very pride was dear to him; he loved not only her, but her faults, and would not have changed her if he could.

There was no weakness in her nature—weakness was intolerable to him—and he gave little thought to the fact that should she consent to be his wife, their two wills must invariably clash to their mutual misery.

He watched her every movement now, exulting in her ripe beauty, thinking how well his precious diamonds would become the stately white throat, the fair arms, and sun-kissed hair; how he would adorn that *svelte* figure with costly lace and all precious fabrics! She could not fail to be happy, he thought, having wealth and homage. And on their wedding-day he would present her with The Towers, freed from all mortgage and encumbrances.

He could fancy how the grand eyes would light up then, how the proud, fair face would flush with joy and gratitude, "and from that hour she will learn to love me," he thought.

He left The Towers that day, content, almost happy; true, Dagmar had been unusually cold, but then a woman should be reserved with her lover, should not be too easily won; and she had promised to dine with him that night; then he would put his fate to the test.

He had no fear of his answer, it was to her own advantage to say yes, and he quite believed she was a woman to be coaxed. If Dagmar did not under-rate her charms, neither did he his wealth and importance.

Dagmar spent the long afternoon in wandering about the neglected gardens, and trying to find some loop hole of escape from her fate. Instinctively she knew that to-night she would

be called on to decide that momentous question she dreaded to hear, with sick dread; and gradually she grew to believe she would do a grand and noble thing in putting aside all love or hope of love, for her father's and his name's sake.

So her resolve was taken, and as she made it, it seemed to her all the beauty and brightness of the day faded around and about her.

She took small pains with her toilet that night. "He shall see me as I am," she thought, disdainfully, "without what small adjuncts of dress I can command."

Her choice, which was rather restricted, fell upon a black net, totally devoid of ornament or colour; but the severe simplicity of it served only to display every line and curve of her exquisite figure; whilst the sombreness of its hue, heightened rather than detracted from the beauty of her skin, the lustre of her hair. She looked at herself with dissatisfied eyes, thinking then that her beauty was a fatal gift, almost wishing she had been born homely.

When she went downstairs her father exclaimed at her funeral attire, and to please him she fastened a cluster of blood-red carnations at her throat, and another at her waist; then, without further preparation, they started for The Cedars.

Miss Cross, who was singularly unlike her brother, being short, fair, and plump, welcomed Dagmar with effusion, now and then comically tinged with awe, the girl's manner being cold and proud in the extreme.

Her talk was mostly of "Cathbert and his doings," and she expatiated largely on the happiness of the woman he should make his wife.

"My dear," she said, confidentially, "he might choose from the best and noblest of the land; and any sensible girl would be glad and grateful for the honour done her. Young men are not to be trusted; they are most unstable and volatile; whilst Cathbert's tastes and habits are all formed, and he thoroughly knows his own mind."

"He is old enough to do so," Dagmar responded, with weary disdain.

The spinster's platitudes and thinly veiled hints angered her. She was heartily glad when dinner was announced.

Her host talked but little to her, but she felt his watchful eyes never left her face; that already he was regarding her as his own especial goods and chattels. That thought brought a flush to her cheeks, and added brilliancy to her beautiful eyes; and Sir Humphrey regarded her with unconcealed satisfaction.

The gentlemen did not sit long over their wine, and when they joined the ladies the banker went at once to Dagmar's side. Miss Cross smiled significantly.

"Miss Danecourt, I have an especially beautiful lotus I want to show you; will you come?"

Without a word she rose and went with him; if the sacrifice were to be made, well, it were wise to make it at once.

Together they went through houses positively crowded with blossoms and plants of every colour and species; the banker talking all the while of indifferent things. At last they passed into one house so hot that Dagmar felt suffocated by the heat and humid air.

"I will not keep you here long," her companion said, with a glance at her flushed face. "Here is the lily, I think you will acknowledge it is superb."

The great, beautiful blossoms nestled amongst the flat leaves and still water. They were many, and perfect in hue and shape. Dagmar gave a little cry of admiration as she bent over them.

"I never saw anything so beautiful," she said, "I could not even imagine it."

He was pleased with her pleasure, but would not give her much time to examine or admire the lotus flowers.

"This place is too hot," he said, "let us get out of it," and he stayed only at the door to point out a magnificent fern. Rescued a cooler atmosphere, he begged her to sit down, whilst he gathered some flowers for her, and inwardly trembling, outwardly calm, she obeyed. Then

he left her, to return presently, laden with a colossal bouquet.

"You have been spoiling your plants for me," Dagmar said, as she took the flowers from him. "I wish you had not done so, Mr. Cross."

As he stood looking down upon her his cold eyes took a warmer expression, his hard face softened; but he was a man utterly devoid of courtier-like ways, utterly incapable of eloquence; and so he said abruptly, almost harshly, "Dagmar, I want to speak to you."

It was coming then! She repressed a shudder, and grasping her flowers tightly, made a sign that she was listening. She was grateful to him that he did not attempt to touch her then.

"I want you for my wife. Your father wishes our union, and for your own sake I believe it is advisable."

Not a word of love! She was thankful, she could the better bear to make her sacrifice. She looked up into his eyes, and seeing the passionate light there, averted her own.

"I will marry you," she said, quite quietly, although her heart was as lead in her bosom; and she gave him one slender hand in ratification of her promise. He held it awkwardly, as if not knowing what to do with it, and how could she guess that every pulse in his body was throbbing with mad joy, that his brain was dizzy with sudden, exquisite rapture?

"I may speak to Sir Humphrey, I may tell him it is settled!"

She bowed; for the life of her she could not speak; so he stooped, and lightly pressing his lips to her beautiful hair, led her back to the drawing-room. She was most grateful to him for his forbearance; it seemed to her that to-night she could not have borne the protestations and caresses of happy love. Sir Humphrey at a glance saw the condition of affairs, and saw, too, Dagmar was in no mood for much congratulation. He only shook hands with the banker, calling him a lucky fellow; and patting his daughter's cheek, declared this was the happiest day of his life. Miss Cross was more effusive, but her brother stopped her flow of congratulations very unceremoniously, so that Dagmar was left in peace.

As they drove home through the clear still night Sir Humphrey said,—

"Our home is saved, Dagmar."

"Yes."

"And I have to thank you; my dear, I hope you will be very happy," and, stooping, he kissed the pale, proud face. "It would have killed me to lose the old place; now I may take a new lease of life."

She turned to him with a sudden touch of tenderness and compassion.

"I am glad if I have pleased you," she said, very, very gently, and returned his kiss, "but do not talk of—of my engagement to-night. I am tired!"

Tired! something more than tired! Sick to the soul, ashamed and degraded in her eyes by the bargain she had made; afraid, yes, horribly afraid, of the future.

"Bought and sold! bought and sold!" so ran her thoughts, "what a despicable wretch I am!"

Very wearily she climbed up to her own room that night; and, leaning out of the window, drank in deep draughts of the cool, dewy air.

"The woodbine spices are wafted abroad,
And the musk of the rose is blown."

But she did not heed sweet scents or sounds. The nightingale's music in the adjoining woods was unheard by her; the loveliness of the summer night was a blank. She only knew that with her own hand she had sealed her doom; with her own hand thrust aside love and joy.

Strange that in the midst of her pain and shame, her vague fears and longings, the bright, frank face of the Australian should so persistently rise before her.

She was angry that it should be so. Why should she remember him! What had they in common?

Impatiently raising, she began hastily to un-

robe. She was very tired, and, despite her misery, fell asleep easily; and her last waking thought was that she had saved The Towers at so great a cost to herself that she sleepily regarded herself very much in the light of a martyr.

Poor, proud, misguided Dagmar!

CHAPTER III.

SIR HUMPHREY was full of the milk of human kindness as he took his coffee the next morning.

He was relieved of all pecuniary embarrassments, his daughter's future was assured, and for the remainder of his life he would live in peace and ease as befitting a Danecourt.

He was disposed, even, to forget his high estate so far as to smile kindly upon his inferiors, and to overwhelm them with his gracious condescension.

"What are you going to do with yourself, Dagmar!" he asked, presently.

"I do not know," listlessly. "Do you want me, papa?"

"If Oh, no; and I dare not claim you now if I did!" with a feeble attempt at jocularity. "I have a most formidable rival in Cross. I suppose he will come over this morning!"

"I really cannot say. Possibly he will, although the heat is insufferable. But Mr. Cross is never governed by the rules that bind other men."

Sir Humphrey smiled vaguely.

"I must repeat that compliment to him, my dear! Really, it is high praise to be called 'unique.'"

"I did not intend it for praise," coldly. Then, lifting her eyes to his, she said, passionately, "Spare, papa, between ourselves, we may drop this miserable farce, and be true!"

"I—I do not understand!" he murmured, staggered by her manner. "I wish, my dear, you would not be so violent, so—so startling!"

She laughed bitterly.

"Ah, papa! what hypocrites we all are! Never mind, let us say no more on the unavailing subject. But you must not jest with me about him; and you must not affect to believe that in winning The Towers I have won happiness."

He was as passionate as he was proud and weak, so he flashed on her,—

"You are an ungrateful girl to quarrel with such a lot as yours! What more can you wish! A well-born, wealthy husband, who madly loves you—"

"I am satisfied!" she interrupted, swiftly. "Do not let us fall out."

He was rather afraid of Dagmar's outbursts, and, after muttering some incoherent complaints, allowed himself to be coaxed into good humour again.

"After all," he thought, "she has saved the estate, and she isn't a girl to break her word. On the whole, I am quite content."

"I think," he said, pushing aside his cup, "I think it would only be a kind and friendly thing to visit that young man at John Truffles'. You see, the accident occurred on my property, and it would be quite proper for me to call upon him."

"Take care, papa," Dagmar said, with a spice of malice: "he may be only a prosperous convict's son!"

Sir Humphrey looked displeased.

"I do not like low jests; and Lennox is a good name, a very good name! Many aristocrats emigrate now to recoup their fortunes, my dear! Yes; I shall certainly call. I feel gratified that he should have travelled so far chiefly to see The Towers," and with that he left her.

Presently she saw him crossing the garden; and, sighing, went to give her few simple orders for the coming day.

Meanwhile Sir Humphrey made his leisurely way towards the "Stump and Magpie."

He was going to please himself, and overwhelm the colonial at the same time; and admiration and homage were the breath of life to him.

John Truffles saw his tall figure strolling along the river bank, and went out to meet him, bowing with every sign of humility.

Frank Lennox, looking out of the old-fashioned window, laughed.

"Great Scott! Whom have we here!" he soliloquized. "Is it the Grand Mogul! What an ass Truffles is making of himself! Who can he be! Coming here, too!"

Further meditations were interrupted by the entrance of John.

"You're in high favour, sir, excuse me. Sir Humphrey Danecourt has sent to know if you will be pleased to see him?"

"Sir Humphrey! Oh! he's her father! Yes, tell him he may come in," answered this irreverent young man. John felt shocked, and as he went slowly back composed a suitable reply to the Baronet's request.

"Mr. Lennox is deeply grateful and highly honoured by your visit, Sir Humphrey, and will you please to follow me!"

Two seconds later the tall, spare figure stood in the narrow doorway. Frank turned his handsome head, and smiled slightly,—

"Come in, come in, if you please. You will excuse me rising. My ankle won't allow any exercise."

He was certainly not overwhelmed. He was a very free young man, thought the visitor with some misgivings as to his wisdom in calling, and he frowned a little as he advanced,—

"I thought Mr.—Mr.—"

"Lennox!" suggested Frank, carelessly.

"Thank you. I thought, Mr. Lennox, I should but be fulfilling my duty as a Christian gentleman in calling to inquire for you. Your accident happening on my estate gives you a claim to my consideration you could not otherwise have had."

Frank had great difficulty in controlling his features. To him Sir Humphrey was an amusing study. His grandiose air was particularly funny to the young Colonial.

"You are very good," he contrived to say, "but won't you sit down?"

Sir Humphrey took a chair at a little distance from the invalid.

"I understand you have dislocated your ankle!"

"No; it is only a severe sprain, and I shall be about again in nine or ten days; but it is awfully rough on a fellow to be tied by the leg in such a place and such weather, I'm bound to get hipped."

His language was high Dutch to his visitor, who found it very hard to sustain the conversation; but, after an awkward pause, he said,—

"I understand your father still lives. I believe Miss Danecourt said something to that effect!"

"Yes, he is alive and jolly," answered Frank, his fine, grey eyes lighting up. "I expect he is on his way now to join me. You see he found he couldn't stand the separation, and naturally wishes to visit his native land after such an absence."

"Has he been long away?"

"Only a matter of thirty years or so," lightly.

"May I ask" (this with a air of a patron) "what trade or profession he follows?"

"He's a granger—one of the most successful ones I know; and he is a gentleman!"

Sir Humphrey could hardly understand how the two things could be combined; but he said, politely, "He is of good old family. The name implies that."

"I'm sure I can't tell you," candidly; "poor my honour I don't think we're burdened with relatives of any sort; we stand alone, he and I."

The other's face took an added shade of pride.

"He must be a man of some taste to admire, and wish you to admire such grand old buildings as England boasts."

"Oh, that was not his primary motive," laughed Frank, flashing a little; "he also commissioned me to find a wife, subject, of course, to his approval."

Sir Humphrey's stare of blank amazement was once more too great for Frank's gravity; he burst into a shout of laughter, which did not tend to mollify his visitor.

"You are a very flippant young man, I fear," he said, as soon as he could make himself heard; "but you ought to know that Englishmen do not countenance adventurers."

"I am not an adventurer," coolly; "my father is prepared to do something handsome for me if my choice pleases him. As for myself, I prefer freedom at present."

His candour was so perfect that even Sir Humphrey smiled.

"And what qualifications must the lady thus selected possess?"

"She must be amiable, of course; but her personal appearance is a matter of no importance, only she must be a lady in every respect."

"Englishmen of rank are not in the habit of giving their daughters to—to men of no position," haughtily.

"No; but occasionally they sell them, which is worse."

Clearly this young man was no respecter of persons; whether he was to be most pitied or condemned Sir Humphrey could not tell. He rose with his grandest air, and wishing Frank a frigid good morning, prepared to go. But this was not Frank's wish.

"Stay, if you please," he said, quickly, "it is so confoundingly lonely here by myself; and upon my soul I'm awfully obliged to you, Sir Humphrey, for taking compassion on me. It was more than I dared hoped."

The elder man turned. His expression showed he was wavering, and Frank was quick to take advantage of his weakness.

"I dare say my way of talking is queer to you; but you must make allowance for the difference of training; pray sit down!"

Sir Humphrey hesitated, then complied. The young man was not without good points, and when he insisted that his visitor should take food cheerily with him Sir Humphrey did not demur.

"Miss Danecourt informed me yesterday that The Towers is not a show place, so I know I am taking a great liberty in pressing my wish upon you; but I should be so sincerely obliged if on my recovery you would give me entrance."

He looked so handsome, so honest, as he sat with his shapely head thrown back, that Sir Humphrey's heart warmed towards him. If he had had a son he should have wished him to resemble this Colonial, at least, in physique; and half unconscious how it came about he found himself chatting easily of the grandeur of his house, his race—a theme of which he never tired.

He even pressed Frank to make as early a visit to The Towers as possible, promising that he or Miss Danecourt would be *cicerons*. Then at last he took his leave, reflecting as he went, "a very pleasant young man, but underbred," which was exactly what Frank was not.

John Truffles looked into the room.

"He is a very grand gentleman, Mr. Lennox, eh?"

"He is an insufferable old prig. Do you grow many like him!" which heretical speech fairly staggered honest John. He retreated to the tap-room to meditate upon it.

Sir Humphrey, at peace with himself and the world, returned to The Towers to find Dagmar and her lover seated under a wide-spreading chestnut, the young lady looking exceedingly weary.

"Ah! Cross. I've been out betimes, you see. Quite an 'early bird.' I really think the happy event of last night has renewed my youth."

Dagmar said nothing. She was trifling with some flowers she held, and her eyes were cast down.

"I am glad you have come," returned Cathbert Cross, in the stiff, slow way so irritating to his fiancée. "I have been having an argument with Dagmar. I see no reason why our marriage should not take place as soon as possible."

"There is none. I am sure she agrees with you on that point."

"On the contrary, she wishes to delay it until December."

"Nonsense! nonsense! Why, Cross, you must make allowance for a young girl's shyness. I should say everything can be in trim by September."

The girl lifted her eyes and looked steadily into her father's, which fell before her strange gaze.

"In this one thing my wishes should be consulted," she said coldly. "I have fixed the fourteenth of December for the happy day (with the slightest possible sneer), and I am resolved not to change my mind."

"Then there is no more to say," returned Cross, in a vexed tone. "It is useless to combat your resolution."

"Quite, Mr. Cross," and rising, she walked to a little distance, there to linger amongst the tall white lilies and crimson roses she so loved.

Presently her lover joined her.

"Come with me out of sight of the house. I have something to show you."

She obeyed him, but her mouth was very mutinous, and her beautiful eyes hard.

Screened from view by shrubs and trees he took her hand, and without a word, slipped a splendid hoop of diamonds upon her finger.

She flushed, started, then said in a lower voice than usual,—

"Thank you. It is very beautiful!"

"May I kiss you?" he asked humbly and deprecatingly.

She turned her hot cheeks unwillingly to him, and submitted to his caress with what grace she could.

"Why will you not come to me sooner?" he asked, emboldened by her concession. "I am too old to waste many months in waiting."

"A woman is not usually governed by reason or logic," she said, half smiling; and the circle of gold and jewels, sign and seal of her bondage, seemed to burn the finger it adorned.

CHAPTER IV.

Mr. Cross had been called to Paris on important business, and Frank Lennox, out for the first time, had gone up to The Towers leaning upon a stick.

Sir Humphrey himself conducted him through the spacious rooms and long corridors, and, pleased with his enthusiasm, gave him an informal invite to luncheon.

Frank was nothing loth to accept. His ankle was growing painful again, and threatened to swell; so he sat down with the Baronet and his daughter, who was looking paler, but lovelier (he thought), than when he last saw her. She seemed weary too, and her smiles were faint, her words few.

"Are not you well, Miss Danecourt?" he ventured to ask.

She lifted her languid, lovely eyes to his.

"Quite, thank you; but the heat tries me a little," and she relapsed into silence.

He had heard of her engagement to Outhbert Cross, but he did not believe in its existence; and when he saw no gleam of a betrothal ring upon her hand he was convinced the rumour was without foundation.

He did not guess that the girl had removed the badge of her slavery as soon as her lover was summoned away, that she never meant to resume it until his return.

How beautiful she was! If only her face were a shade less proud she would be perfect. He wished she would join more freely in the conversation, she liked the music of her low voice; and he listened eagerly when she was induced to speak.

Luncheon ended, Sir Humphrey rose, and pressing the young man to stay the remainder of the day, he retired to the library, where "some important papers needed his attention," this was always his excuse for his sloth; and Frank found himself alone with his hostess.

"What shall we do with ourselves?" he asked, smiling over at her.

"Would you like to go into the gardens; they are nice just now!"

"I would prefer a row down the river; you could steer."

"It is very hot for exertion of any kind; but if you think it will not harm you to walk to the bank, I have no objection;" so they went.

It was very pleasant to Dagmar, sitting almost idle, listening to her companion's frank speech. A soft breeze sighed through the overhanging trees, which cast a grateful shade upon the clear, smooth water, and the whole earth was ripe with sweet scents and sounds. Frank rested on his oars and looked at her.

"That is better," he said. "You have some colour in your cheeks now."

She blushed slightly, and laughed a little; his open ways were so refreshing, he was so big, so strong, so kindly, so very, very natural, that instinctively she trusted him, although she was not given to sudden likings.

"So you expect your father will join you?" she asked, ignoring his speech.

"In a short time, yes. We shall journey back together."

"And your mother, does she not come too?"

"I have no mother, she died at my birth, five-and-twenty years ago; besides my father I have no one; my mother was the only child of an only child. There is a similarity in our positions, Miss Danecourt; you seem not overburdened with relatives."

"Oh, I've a great many cousins, although I am not familiar with them. Papa, however, is the last male on his side of the house. His only brother died years ago."

"That was a blow to him."

"I don't know. I fancy they were not very good friends. My uncle was the eldest son, and I believe he loved my mother; but when she chose papa, he went off to Australia and never returned."

"Did you ever hear of him again?"

"Yes, he wrote papa several times; then came a silence followed by convincing proofs of his death so papa took possession. It is a sore grief to him that none of my brothers lived to uphold the glory of our race."

"You are very proud of your name!"

The flush on her cheek answered him, even before she spoke.

"There is no older family, and none more noble in England!" she said.

"Do you know I can't quite understand your pride in your long lineage. (I am a colonial remnant.) To me it seems far nobler to raise oneself from a low estate, than to be great by descent—that is merely an accident of birth, and no matter for self-gratulation."

She looked at him in haughty displeasure.

"Your view is peculiar. I am sorry I cannot agree with you, Mr. Lennox."

"I am unfortunate to offend you," he said, gravely; "but you would surely not deny my right to form an opinion. It seems to me that the best man is he,—"

"Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best."

The rebuke was spoken so kindly, so frankly, that Dagmar was ashamed of her petulant display.

"You hardly understand," she said gently, "and I suppose no amount of explanation would make it clear to you, Mr. Lennox."

"I am afraid not; I am a dull dog!" smiling kindly back at her, "and so let us talk of more congenial topics," and he began to tell her wonderful stories of his native land, describing people and scenes so vividly, so graphically that she seemed to see them.

She had never spent so pleasant an afternoon, and was sorry when the lengthening shadows warned her they must go home. Sir Humphrey, met them on the bank, and giving the Colonial a general invite, carried his daughter off with him. He had no fear for her, she was at Danecourt and for her to love a plebeian was impossible; there could be nothing offensive in such intercourse to Cross; then, too, Dagmar, looked so much brighter and better for her trip that he was pleased. And the girl herself thought of no evil.

Frank was pleasant company, and made a break in the monotony of her life, and although she was quite sure Outhbert Cross would object to

their acquaintance, she saw in this no reason to deny herself a little amusement.

So the days wore by, or fled rather, and life took a new aspect for Dagmar. She grew afraid of herself, of the strange, wild joy and fear alternately possessing her; of that great throb of gladness which turned her sick and faint when Frank came; of the tremor which possessed her if he but touched her hand; of the chill disappointment if he failed to come (though indeed that was rare) and the eagerness with which she watched for the first glance of the magnificent figure, hurrying across the distant meadow.

She would not confess, even to her own heart, that she loved him, that he alone could make her happiness or woe, and yet she was vaguely and miserably conscious of this. As for Frank, well against his will and judgment, he returned her passion with a strength and fervour beyond all words to tell.

She was not the sort of woman he had ever dreamed of, not at all his ideal, despite her beauty and her grace; she had many faults, and he saw them plainly enough, and there was much he wished changed in her; and yet he loved her with all his soul.

He was the first who had ever dared to chide her for her intense pride, and he never scrupled to do so, whilst she wondered at her meekness in enduring his rebukes.

One day, after a very pronounced exhibition of the Danecourt spirit, he stood looking gravely at her until she asked,—

"What are you thinking? Something to my disadvantage?"

"Of some lines I once read, and now apply to you,—"

'By pride
Angels have fallen ere thy time.'

And that pride is the 'sole alloy of thy most lovely mould.'

She flushed over throat and brow, and at first he thought her angry, but in a moment she undeceived him.

"I am afraid," she said, almost meekly; "I am afraid I often disgust you, but you must try to make allowance for my training. I have been reared in pride, and pride alone can help me in the dreary life before me."

"As how? Miss Danecourt, if you know how infinitely lovelier you are in this softer mood, you would always wear it."

"Should I?" with a bitter little laugh. "I think not. My beauty has never brought me any happiness."

"Not the happiness of being beloved? Surely you are forgetful."

She turned from him, but not before he had seen the look of startled fear and pain upon the exquisite face; he possessed himself of one slender hand.

"What is the trouble, Dagmar? Is it anything in which my assistance is possible?"

She snatched her hand from him.

"No, no; no one can help me, and few would pity me!" and, without another word, she walked hurriedly away.

He did not seek to follow her; he saw that, for some reason, she was best alone.

"Poor girl! poor girl!" he mused, as he turned toward the inn. "I darsay her poverty galls her; please Heaven that source of pain shall soon be a stranger to her if she will only listen to me, my darling, my queen!"

Dagmar entered the hall, where the light lay in patches on the grey and white marble and shone on the faces of an old Danecourt and his lady; the former reputed to be the proudest of his proud race; she glanced hurriedly into his dark face, and to her excited imagination it seemed to look scornfully and reproachfully down at her; she moved slowly away and went to the breakfast-room, where some letters awaited her—one bore a foreign stamp.

All her strength seemed to fall her then; mechanically she took it up, and moving to a window, sat down on the deep sill.

Slowly she opened it, and read with whitening lips the few stiff lines so characteristic of the writer.

"DEAR DAGMAR,—

"I shall return to Danecourt by the earliest train from Dover on Thursday, and shall do myself the pleasure of seeing you at an early hour of the evening. Trusting you and your esteemed father are well,

"Yours devotedly, C. C."

She let the letter fall from her nerveless fingers, and sat looking out with unseeing eyes over the lovely land. This most unwelcome letter had shown her all her heart, and with a wild horror she realised that Frank Lennox was more than all the world to her.

In this hour of extremity she was weak as a little child, crushed to the earth with the burden of her bitter agony and shame. Bound by honour to a man she now loathed, vowed to save her heritage by the supreme sacrifice of self. What had she to do with love? Oh, fool and blind! so to drift with the tide; so to forget her bond and the traditions of her race. What maiden of her line had ever stooped to a plebeian unknown lover!

And yet, and yet—if she were free, how glad would she be to throw herself upon his breast, and there renounce all that she had once held dear, for his love's sake.

"It would have been better to have died before I saw his face," she thought. "Oh, Heaven! Oh, Heaven! what remains for me now!"

Pale and still she sat, neither weeping nor moaning, and the light faded slowly from the sky, the shadows deepened and darkened all around and about her; and still she sat there unconscious of passing time, heedless of all save her wordless, tearless agony.

Presently a servant entered.

"Shall I serve dinner, Miss; Sir Humphrey dines with Mr. Lennox."

She shivered at his name, and answered in so strange a tone that the man wondered.

"No thank you, I want nothing, unless you bring me a glass of water."

She did not change her position whilst he hastened to obey; and her voice was all but inaudible when she spoke again.

"Who brought Sir Humphrey's message? How long since?"

"Willie Truffles, miss; half an hour ago."

"Thank you. You may go."

And when the door closed behind him she threw out her arms with a tragic gesture, and her face was so changed and distorted by her anguish that its beauty was gone.

"Oh, love! love! good-bye! good-bye!" she moaned; and then, as though she could not bear the gloom and silence of the room, she fled into the sweet, still night, whose calmness seemed to mock at the storm within her breast.

Up and down her favourite terrace she walked, a white-robed, ghostly figure, never resting a moment until fatigue compelled her.

She did not guess how late it was, until her father's voice spoke her name, and in turning to reply, she found herself confronted by Frank.

"I've just walked up with your father, Miss Danecourt; and seeing you here, lingered for a word."

Sir Humphrey was still moving away from them; and, seeing how changed and wan was her face, the young man leant over her.

"What has gone wrong? You poor darling, what is troubling you?"

CHAPTER V.

The kindness and love in his voice broke down her self-control.

A piteous little sob rose to her lips as in a flash she saw all that she would renounce in renouncing this man's devotion.

To see her in tears—she who was always so strong and proud—was to scatter all Frank's remaining prudence to the winds.

"Sweetheart! sweetheart!" he whispered. "Can't you trust me? Don't you know that I love you better than life itself?"

And then, after a hurried glance in Sir Humphrey's direction, he had her safe in his arms, and was kissing the pale lips passionately.

Just a moment she rested in his embrace as they stood in the darkest shadows of the trees; just a moment she gave herself up to this new wild joy, and listened to his voice pleading,—

"You do love me a little, darling! Let me hear you say that once before I go."

Then her father called to her,—

"Dagmar! It is late. Come in now, child!"

That dispelled her dream—her new-found perilous bliss, and she tried to tear herself away from her impetuous lover, but he held her fast.

"Only say it, sweetheart, and I will let you go! Say you love me!"

"Heaven pity me! I do!" she wailed.

And then, before he could stay her, she twisted herself out of his arms, and fled through the gathering darkness.

Frank walked home not ill-contented. Her wild cry of "Heaven pity me!" caused him no serious anxiety. He concluded that she feared her father's opposition to his suit, and thought,—

"But the governor will smooth all difficulties out of my way. He can afford to be generous, and he will. My darling shall never feel the sting of poverty again!"

He would hardly have slept so soundly and peacefully had he known the cruel truth, could he have seen that white-robed, prostrate figure writhing in its lonely agony.

But he was blissfully unconscious of this and all that lay before him; and when he rose in the morning his heart was light as a child's.

He was eating his early breakfast with infinite relish, when Truffles entered with a telegram.

"For you, sir. I hope it is not bad news."

He tore it open, and read,—

"From Thomas Lennox to Frank Lennox."

"Meet me at King's Cross 12.30 this morning. Am coming up from Southampton."

"Oh, no, Truffles! It is good news. My father has arrived in England. I must meet him in town to-day."

"Ain't it curious, sir, he knows where to find you?"

"Oh, no, not at all. Of course, he got my address from his bankers. I agreed to keep them acquainted with my whereabouts. But I've no time to lose if I am to be at King's Cross at 12.30. Just pack a few things into my valise, please."

"I hope we're not going to lose you, sir!"

"Not just yet. I shall be back in a few days, bringing my father with me, no doubt."

And, as Truffles hurried away, he sat down, and scribbled a few lines to Dagmar, explaining the reason for his hasty departure. And, his preparations being concluded, shook hands with the landlord, entrusting the note to him, and rushed off to the station, being barely in time to catch his train.

When his note was given Dagmar she was already engaged in writing him the explanation he deserved, and which she felt she could not give by word of mouth; but, thankful for this reprieve, she tore it into a thousand fragments; and, reading his assurance of love again and again, burst into a passion of weeping.

Her tears relieved her in a measure; and when she had done her best to remove the traces they left, she went downstairs to spend this heavy day as best she could, to call all her recalcitrant courage to the fore—she would need it all to meet Cathbert Cross, and play her bitter part.

Slowly the heavy hours wore by, and the servants noticed amongst themselves that "Miss Dagmar looked very pale and ill, that she had done so ever since she got that letter last night," and cook opined their young lady liked the banker "just as much as she did a toad."

Sir Humphrey told her she was a dull companion, and declared young Lennox was selfish to go off in such a hurry, leaving him utterly without society or amusement. Then she was left alone, and never at any time could she tell how she spent that wretched day. Evening came at last, and she sat in a deep window watching in sick anguish for her lover's coming; she

hardly knew yet how she should meet him; sometimes she thought she would throw herself on his mercy, confess all, and ask for her release. But instinctively she felt that Cathbert Cross would not be generous, and that she would have humbled herself for nought—then The Towers—it would break her father's heart to lose this place now, when he had thought his position so assured. No, she must go through with her sacrifice to the bitter end.

Soon she saw Mr. Cross advancing slowly, and to save her life she could not advance a step to meet him, but stood white and still at the open window waiting for him to join her, which he shortly did.

"You are looking ill," he said, his manner is no way betraying his great and passionate joy at seeing her. "What have you been doing to yourself?" and stooping, he kissed her cheek.

A shiver stole over her as she moved a little from him.

"I am very well," she said coldly; "have you had a pleasant holiday?"

"You forget, it was business took me away, Dagmar."

"But surely the two may be combined, in such a place as Paris."

"I am not much of a pleasure-seeker, Dagmar; how have you amused yourself during our separation? Sarah says you have called but once at The Cedars."

"I have been otherwise engaged," she answered with averted face.

"As how?" he asked persistently; "usually you have much leisure time."

"Really, Mr. Cross, I should have kept a diary for your especial benefit. I have yet to learn that all my actions are under your control."

"They will be shortly; and indeed I have already the right to control them. Is it true that you have spent many hours at the society of that Australian adventurer; and with your father's consent?"

"Yes," and she was thankful that the gathering dusk hid her guilty flush; "but please remember Mr. Lennox is a gentleman."

"Is he? Well, granting that, I still object to any intercourse between you. Do you understand I will not permit you to see or speak with him again; that in this thing my will is absolute—that no man but myself shall claim your thoughts, your time, or your affection?"

She sat quite still, her hands fast locked, her head drooped; so meek that the man beside her thought he had been unduly harsh, and wondered a little where was her pride.

"My darling," he said in a gentler voice than he had ever used to her, "my darling, am I hard? Then it is because I love you so madly, and I so fear to lose you. Dagmar, have you no word of welcome for me?"

She moved impatiently, and possessing himself of her hands, he asked,—

"Are you angry? Why are you so silent? Surely you do not regret foregoing your new friend's society?"

"I regret nothing," she answered, flashing into anger, "nothing except the folly which induced me to trust my happiness to one so unjust and arbitrary as yourself; and I utterly refuse to treat Mr. Lennox otherwise than contemptuously;" she rose as she spoke, and moved to a distant part of the room; but he followed her.

"Some men would be angry with you; but I am not. I am willing to make every allowance for your youth. It is natural you should like admiration and pleasure, and of the latter you shall have all you can desire. But I will have no lovers declared or undeclared haunting you. You are mine, and no bitter words of yours can cancel our bond."

"Say no more," she began, in a low, passionate voice, but the entrance of Sir Humphrey put an end to the dispute, and for the remainder of the evening she allowed her lover no chance of private speech.

That night Frank sat with his father, who had taken private apartments near the Strand, and he was talking eagerly.

"She's the best and dearest girl under the sun," he was saying, "her only fault is pride of race, and I believe she will forget even that for me."

She is so beautiful, so gracious, that I can hardly understand yet that she is to be mine."

"And her name! Say it again, Frank; I have forgotten it."

"Dagmar Danecourt. I am afraid there'll be a great fuss made when Sir Humphrey knows the truth; he's bent on marrying her to some rich old fogey just to save that grand old place of his."

Mr. Lennox was silent a moment, and his face wore a very strange expression; but Frank was not looking at him, so he said, presently,—

"Her husband, then, must be willing to clear The—The Towers, I think, you call it! How are you to manage that!"

"Why, father, I thought you would help me do that! You know you insisted I should choose a lady, and I have obeyed you," smiling.

"I did not say an impecunious lady, Frank; and, although I am tolerably well-to-do, I am not at all disposed to go about the country clearing off mortgages, and settling distressed gentlemen upon their feet."

"Only tolerably well-to-do," repeated Frank, blankly, "then my chance is small."

"Not if the girl loves you," quickly; "if she does not, if her pride of race is greater than her affection let her go; she will never make you happy!"

"But, father—"

"That is enough. I have nothing more to say on the subject, except this. Go down to Danecourt to-morrow, and put your fate to the test."

With that Frank had to rest content; and, rising early the next morning, he bade his father an affectionate good-bye, and left for Danecourt.

Arrived there, he asked for Miss Danecourt, only to be informed that she was out. So begging writing materials, he scribbled these lines:—

"MY DARLING.—Meet me at Fanford's Pool (where we first met) at 8.15 this evening. I have much of importance to say to you.—E. L."

This note was handed to Dagmar on her return from Danesford. She was to dine at The Cedars; but come what would she must see Frank to-night, if only to tell him all the truth, to beg his forgiveness, because she had been something less than candid with him.

So Miss Danecourt retired to her own room complaining of a violent headache, which seemed only to increase as the day wore by.

She felt wretchedly ill indeed before the appointed hour arrived. Her face was blanched, her eyes heavy, with dark circles about them.

Sir Humphrey was too concerned to ask any questions, and drove off alone somewhat reluctantly, and at last Dagmar was free.

It was a sure sign of misery that she was utterly careless of her toilet—a most unprecedented event with her. She was certainly not looking her best as she hurried through the gardens, a grey shawl wrapped about her head and shoulders, her white dress all limp and tumbled.

But Frank was too happy to know these things when he saw her emerge from amongst the trees and bushes.

He hurried to meet her, his face radiant with love and happiness; he had no forebodings of evil now she was near; but when he looked into her eyes, when he saw how wan the lovely face had grown, a great dread fell upon him.

He drew her very near to him, but for awhile he did not speak, perhaps he could not, and she lay still in his embrace, wrestling with the terrible anguish possessing her soul.

"Well, Dagmar," he said, at length, and with hidden face, she cried,—

"It is not well; oh, my love, my love! can you forgive me? Will you try very hard to forgive me, the wretchedest woman on earth!"

"What have you done that needs forgiveness, sweetheart? Why are your pretty eyes all dimmed with tears? Have you been suffering because of me, you poor darling? Well, it is all over, and we are going to be happy in spite of them all. Dagmar, darling Dagmar, my father is waiting for his daughter!"

She wrung her hands in helpless, hopeless agony, and, despite his efforts to keep her near, wrested herself from him.

"Go back to him, Frank—my Frank, and tell him she is never coming; that she is a wicked woman, who has stolen his boy's heart, but tell him, too, she suffers. Oh, Heaven! she suffers too—forgive me, forgive me. I was not free even when we met first."

And leaning against a tree, she hid her face upon her arm, and waited for him to speak.

CHAPTER VI.

He stood looking blankly down upon her, not understanding at first what her wild words meant; but as the truth dawned upon him, his face changed, and hardened, and his voice was very stern as he said,—

"Do you mean you have wilfully and wantonly deceived me all along?"

"No, no. I never thought how it would be. I never guessed—perhaps I would not—and I gave up my freedom the very day we met."

"And why, if you had no love for this man, did you give yourself to him? Why have you been so silent concerning your engagement?"

"At first," she said, in a choking voice, "I thought there was no need to tell you anything, you were an utter stranger—and then—and then—gradually I grew to care for you, he was away, and I—I longed so for a little happiness."

His face softened somewhat as the piteous voice died out, and he drew a little nearer.

"You have not told me yet what led to your engagement."

"My father wished it, and he is very rich and generous."

"And you valued wealth so highly!" in a tone of infinite pity.

"I wanted to save The Towers, and Mr. Cross had promised to free it of all mortgages and encumbrances. I—I—oh! Frank, I will tell you all the truth. I was in a hurry to be wealthy. I hated poverty, and was willing—oh! not only willing, but determined to sacrifice everything that was best and noblest in me to my passion for luxury and power."

Where was her pride when she could make such confession of her faults and follies? Broken down utterly and for ever by Love's Control, she was weak as the weakest of her sex.

"And now," he asked, "what will you do now?"

She lifted her passionate face to his.

"Tell me what to do, and I will do it; Frank, I can only obey you. Heaven knows I would willingly, gladly share your lot, toil with and for you, fare meanly, wear out my life in labour for you, if that might be. Oh! my love, my love, save me from myself and the fate I have worked out for myself!"

He had her in his arms now, and she knew, as his lips touched hers, how freely he forgave her, how fondly he loved her, despite her pride and folly; she burst into a passionate flood of tears.

With a touch as gentle as a woman's he smoothed the heavy hair from her aching temples.

"There is only one thing to be done, sweetheart; you must make a clean breast of this to—Mr. Cross, and ask for your release. He can but grant it."

"He never will. Oh! you do not know him!"

"He is a poor sort of fellow, who is willing to hold a woman to him against her wish, who would marry her, knowing that she has no love for him! And I say, that having in some measure turned against him, you must repair the wrong at once; and I will see your father. Keep a brave heart, Dagmar, we shall weather the storm."

He spoke more hopefully than he felt, and instinctively the girl knew this.

"We shall never come together. We may never again meet as we do now," she wailed; "dear heart, I will do your bidding, but I

know it will be vain labour, and so to-night—just now, when we are parting, kiss me, and tell me you forgive me—then let me go away to the misery which is of my own working!"

"I will not lightly let you go," he answered, pressing her close, "and if you love me truly you will not be afraid to give up all for me."

"But my father! It would break his heart to lose The Towers!"

"Hearts are not easily broken; and better one should suffer than three lives be spoiled. What joy do you think your husband would have in you! What good would remain to me! What peace and content to you! Dagmar, for Heaven's sake, be true to yourself."

"It is harder than you think; but if I should ask my freedom and he refuse, what then! Can I honourably break my word!"

"Do not tempt me," he said, with the first sign of weakness she ever had or ever was to see in him. "You don't know what this means for me. You must let your conscience be your guide. I dare say no more."

She clung about him in a paroxysm of passion and pain, crying out that she loved him more than life; that she was a wicked woman who craved the pardon he might well deny her; that come what would she should love him to the end, bless his name with her last breath.

And he held her fast, speaking little, lest his shaken voice should tell her how much she was bearing, how cruelly she was trying him; and when she had grown quieter, he lifted the lovely tortured face between his hands, and looking into the dusky eyes, said,—

"This is cruel to both, my darling; let us say good-bye to-night—now, hoping that the morrow will bring us comfort and joy."

She sighed. It was so hard to part, but it was wise; she looked wistfully round on the fair and peaceful scene, which must always remain indelibly impressed upon her memory—the bending trees, the tall rushes rising out of the placid stream; and "the day dying out on the crest of the hill;" all these things she must remember together with her misery until her dying hour.

"I am going," she said at last, "and I will do as you wish. I will ask for my release. Should I be so blessed as to obtain it, I will write you to-morrow; if not, let there be silence between us now and ever. It will be then my duty to forget you. Good-bye, Frank, good-bye!"

She slipped from his embrace then, and he did not seek to stay her.

He was not infallible, and the sight of her anguish was fast making him forget the claim Cross had upon her. So in silence they parted; and he watched her white-robed figure moving swiftly among the trees and bushes until he could see her no longer; then he went slowly and heavily home.

How Dagmar spent the night she could not tell. She lay tossing to and fro, unable to sleep, unable to think in any clear fashion; and she was glad when the day dawned. She was so many hours nearer knowing her fate, and anything was better than this suspense.

She rose early, and breakfasted alone, that is made a pretence of eating. Then Sir Humphrey came down, and seeing how white and wan she was, begged she would consult the family doctor, but she shook her head with a pitiful smile; and, thinking that it might be she should soon grieve him greatly, kissed him with such warmth, such tenderness, he was astonished and gratified alike.

Still later Mr. Cross arrived, bearing a bouquet of chelidoni flowers, and expressing his concern in his stiff, grave way at her indisposition.

"It is nothing," she said, impatiently. "I am never really ill." Then, abruptly, "I shall be glad if you will walk with me; I wish to say something to you that I can say better out of doors than here. Will you come?"

He was only too glad. She had never before proffered such a request, and he had no idea of what was before him. He never thought she would hesitate to marry him, knowing that The Towers was dearer to her almost

than life itself; and he waited patiently whilst she went to dress.

Her toilet occupied very little time, and she joined him presently, looking very beautiful in her perfectly-fitting blue cotton gown, and a broad white hat, which had seen long service, but was eminently becoming to the face it shadowed.

"We will go through the meadows," she said, without glancing at him. "It will be pleasant under the trees."

So they passed out together through the old, luxuriant gardens, where Dagmar idly gathered a few carnations, with which she toyed as she walked; and the man beside her, looking down upon her, exulted that such beauty was his very own.

The walk promised to be a silent one. Cuthbert Cross was never given to much speech, and Dagmar was debating in her own mind how to broach the subject so near her heart.

All her tact seemed to have deserted her in this hour of need, and finally she burst out desperately,—

"Mr. Cross, I have been thinking I wronged you when I agreed to become your wife, because—because, you see, I have no love to give you!"

He winced a little, but answered in his ordinary manner,—

"There is no wrong done. I am well aware that you give me no affection; but I am certain I can win it in time, and I am content to wait."

"But—but if I assured you I never could love you, that in promising all I did I thought only of The Towers, and how to save it!"

"I should still hold you to your promise, I was never blind to the motive of your acceptance. I was never vain enough to think my 'personal charms' (this with a bitter sneer) could win any woman's regard, more especially that of a young and lovely woman. Suppose we speak of other things!"

"No!" firmly now, because so much was at stake. "Let me finish all I came out to say. Mr. Cross, the thought of such a marriage has become loathsome to me! Let me confess all the truth. My heart has gone wholly beyond my keeping. I ask you now to give me back my freedom, to forgive me the wrong I have done you."

"Stop!" he said, in a strange, hard voice. "Who is this man for whom you have forgotten the duty due to me! Do I know him!"

"By report, yes," she answered, the hot blood flushing her face.

"Then it is Lennox, this Australian adventurer, who has probably left a wife behind, who is making you the sport of his idle hours. You do well, Miss Danecourt, to forget the traditions of your race—the honourable name of which you are guardian."

"I deserve many harsh words from you," she said, humbly. "I have greatly wronged you; but please remember I will bear no word against Mr. Lennox. He is an honourable gentleman!"

"Has this honourable gentleman spoken to you of his attachment to you?"

"Yes," she said, desperately, "but he believed me to be free. I had never spoken of you to him."

"You mean you were ashamed of me, that you repented your bargain? May I ask if Sir Humphrey has been taken into your confidence?"

"He has not!"

"He will be hardly pleased with the turn affairs have taken. And may I ask what reply you made to my rival?"

"I told him I would ask you to free me, to cancel my promise; but that if you held me to it, in honour I was bound to marry you."

"Very well; I hold you to it," and there was hardly any change in his face or voice; but she knew him to be implacable, and trembled for herself and Frank. Still she would make one further appeal; laying her hand on the man's arm, she said,—

"Please listen to me, patiently. If you compel me to fulfil my promise, I shall make no outcry, I shall even try to do my duty towards you; but I warn you that I shall never forget him,

or love him less; that all my wretched life long I shall remember him regretfully, and shrink from you, whose selfishness spoiled all my days."

He heard her in silence, but when she ended he broke out so violently that she was startled.

"Say what you will, and do not spare my feelings; but I tell you all your pleading is useless. If you loathed me a thousand times more than now you do, I would still marry you. I love you, I love you! Do you hear, girl? And what can this fellow know of passion such as mine? Against your will, I will hold you mine; against your will I shall win your heart! Write your lover that I shall never forego my claim, that you dare not break your bond, because that would mean ruin for you and yours—the utter loss of The Towers."

She looked steadily into his eyes then, and said, coldly,—

"Pray communicate this intelligence to Mr. Lennox. I have vowed to have no further correspondence with him, and remember whatever evil comes of this lies at your door, not mine."

She would have turned away but he caught and held her.

"You cold and beautiful darling!" he said, in a voice made hoarse by passion. "You shall yet learn to love me, even as I love you;" he held her so fast to his breast, whilst he rained kisses upon the sweet lips and fair brow, that she could neither struggle nor cry out; and when he had satisfied the long, long hunger of months and years, and set her free, she covered her face with her hands and wept piteously. How could he so insult her, she who was so entirely and irrevocably Frank's! And Frank waited in alternate hope and fear for some tidings from her, but none came, and in the morning he returned to London and Mr. Lennox.

CHAPTER VII.

"AND YOU mean to tell me, Frank, that you will let this poor girl go to certain misery without an attempt to save her?"

"What else can I do in honour, father! Do you think I do it willingly?"

"I think you are a stupid young jackanapes! What does this fellow Cross know of honour or mercy, or any other manly feeling? Nothing! What sort of life do you think Miss Danecourt will lead as his wife? I know the fellow! Oh! yes, Master Frank, stare if you will, but it is true; I knew him years ago when we were boys together, and he was always hard and merciless; strictly honourable in business relations he has proved himself, but there all praise of him ends. And, I tell you candidly, if you let this poor girl fulfil her contract, you will have helped materially to work her misery."

"Father!" the cry broke from him involuntarily, his handsome young face grew ashen, and his lips quivered a moment; but recovering himself instantly, he said, "Tell me, what you would do under the circumstances!"

"Marry the girl without delay; explain all to her father afterwards."

"Would you give that advice to a man who would marry a daughter of yours without your consent?" said Frank, slyly.

"Of course I should; but Heaven saw fit to bless me with only one child, a raw, troublesome youth, with neither brains nor beauty to speak of!"

But Frank was not listening, and watching his haggard face, the elder man grew graver; and presently he said,—

"Look here, my boy, I think you had better leave the management of this affair to me. I will go down to The Towers and interview Miss Danecourt, will show her the case in all its bearings, and plead your cause far better than you could plead it yourself. If I am successful you must make preparations for a speedy wedding; let me see, the girl is of age in something less than a fortnight!"

"How did you know that father?" asked Frank, surprisedly.

"You must have told me, my boy," answered the other coolly, as he loaded and lit his pipe. "You've been in such a state of worry since your return, that you don't know what you have said or left unsaid. Well, it is decided I go down to her to-morrow!"

"Yes; but father, I am quite sure I never told you her age."

"Then I have guessed it," composedly. "Have you any message, Frank?"

"None, we determined to preserve strict silence; but I am thinking what any rupture with Cross will mean for Sir Humphrey, it would kill him to lose The Towers."

"Fiddlesticks! and we shall find means to save the old place. I have a fancy to see you established as an English gentleman, and we can square Cross."

Frank shook his head.

"I am utterly hopeless; but you shall do as you wish, only don't be too certain of success. You are only laying up disappointment for yourself."

But Mr. Lennox smiled significantly. Apparently he had great faith in his own wisdom and plans.

"My boy, you know the old saying, 'Faint heart never won fair lady.' Surely you won't give in without a struggle! And so far as I gather you have not attempted to win over Sir Humphrey. Surely his affection for his daughter would make him anxious for her happiness?"

"He thinks it is insured already; but I will write him if you wish."

Accordingly the letter was written. Frank honestly and warmly declared his love for Dagmar, his ability to keep her in suitable style, his willingness to assist Sir Humphrey to the utmost of his power, and wound up with an entreaty that he would consider his daughter's future happiness above all things else—even his name and his ancestral home.

The letter was handed to Sir Humphrey as he sat drinking coffee the next morning, and the effect it had upon him was precisely opposite to what Frank could wish.

(Continued on page 161.)

FLOWER OF FATE.

—301—

CHAPTER VI.

"ANICE, here is a letter from your brother. He is coming down to-day."

"Is he?" observed Lady Anice, carelessly. She was standing before her long mirror twisting and turning her dainty figure to see how a lovely robe of ivory satin (which had just arrived from Paris, and which her maid—was trying on) appeared in her eyes.

"Dunmoor is much troubled," sighed the Countess, sinking into a chair. "What dress is this, Anice?" she added, anxiously, as she beheld the costly satin.

"One from Roderick's. Dunmoor is troubled you say, mamma! Dear me, that is extraordinary! I never knew Dunmoor anything but troubled."

"I wish to have a chat with you," the Countess said. "Can you give me five minutes?"

Lady Anice almost stamped her foot in her vexation.

"Take off this dress, Taylor, and give me some sort of wrap. I do wish, mamma, you would let me know when you are coming to worry me!"

The mother's faded face grew touched with crimson at this remark before the maid. She said nothing, however, and waited while the garment was lifted from her daughter's form and deposited on a couch.

"Now, mamma," demanded Lady Anice, wrapping a voluminous pale blue silk peignoir about her, looking exceedingly pretty and cross, "what is it?"

For answer the Countess opened a letter and drew forth an enclosure.

"Read that!" she said.

Lady Anice ran her eye over it, and frowned deeply.

"Dunmoor is simply a disagreeable prig," she exclaimed. "Are my bills heavier than his, I should like to know! And what on earth is there to prevent his settling these paltry few!"

"Paltry few, Anice!" exclaimed the Countess, aghast. "My dear child, remember Roderick's account alone is nearly a thousand! Your extravagance is terrible. You know our condition. You know—"

"I know that because I happen to have a father who has plunged his whole estate in debt I am to be denied everything!"

"Anice, that is not true. You know why the estates are so impoverished. To speak of your poor father, lying now stricken down with paralysis, is worse than cruel—it is a sin. You have had everything you want. Do you stint yourself! Look at my wardrobe! All old dresses remade, whilst you, with the terrible bill hanging over your head unpaid, have even ordered another costly gown from Roderick's, and wear it without a single thought or care. Anice, you are very wrong!"

Lady Anice tapped the floor impatiently.

"Why did my father impoverish us so!" she muttered. "We may have birth, but we are, after all, only beggars."

The Countess looked worn and weary. She passed her white hand over her brow.

"What need to return to the past!" she said gently. "Honour, Anice, came first in all to your father. To clear his father's memory he sacrificed himself."

"And others."

"Who feels this sacrifice!" asked the mother, quietly. "Do you! Have I not neglected my poor husband to give you every pleasure in my power! While your brother is striving with all his might to uphold our position by strict economy you have done nothing to help us; indeed, only add your share to the burden."

"That will do, mamma," cried Lady Anice, rising abruptly. "I am sick of reproaches. I have nothing else all day long."

"Anice, are you utterly heartless!"

Lady Anice shrugged her shoulders.

"I can read riddles well," she observed coldly. "Rex Darnley has been talking to you, and abusing me as usual. You are always disappointed with me, mamma, when Rex is near at hand."

"You are mistaken, Anice," the Countess answered. "Rex has said nothing to me on the subject of your extravagance. How could he! He knows nothing."

Lady Anice was intent on examining her dress.

"Is this all you wanted to say!" she asked as her mother passed.

"I wish to warn you that Dunmoor will be here."

"Well, I am glad of it. I shall soon make him understand there is to be no nonsense about my extravagance. What are a few paltry dresses to the thousands papa spent on redeeming the estate; and as you are all so anxious I should make a good marriage I must dress well. Now, mamma, if you are finished Taylor had better return. This gown requires some alterations, and I must wear it at the ball next Friday."

The Countess folded the letter she held, and walked to the door in silence.

When alone Lady Anice stamped her foot in anger, and disfigured her pretty countenance with a pouting frown.

"It is too disgusting!" she muttered, "mamma is always like this when Rex is near. Rex—ugh! I positively hate him. I shan't forgive him in a hurry for taking the Earl away last night just to walk home with those low actresses. I got it out of Mr. Motte they did walk home with them, and now mamma will go and tell Rex all about my bills, and he will set Dunmoor on not to pay them. He must pay them, for I can't, and Roderick is growing quite insolent!"

Meanwhile down in the village Vera was spending a quiet day. Maggie Delane had gone out for a drive with Mr. Motte, greatly to the amusement, and not a little to the scandal of Mrs.

Watson's neighbours. There was no rehearsal—the success of last night had induced Mr. De Mortimer to keep the same piece in the bill, so Vera was free to do as she liked.

All day she was thoughtful and sad and strangely weary. The great mental excitement she had endured that morning, as she rushed forward and snatched a fellow-creature from death, had passed away and left her quite fatigued. The face of the man she had saved was always before her, and the thought of his crime and the man he had wronged haunted her.

She could not push the idea of fear from her mind when the thought of Rex Darnley came. His dark, stern, handsome countenance, his quiet, resolute voice and manner, all struck a chill when she pictured the poor, weak criminal acknowledging his wrong. She tried to forget the incident, but could not; and when Amy brought up a cup of afternoon tea she broke into a hurried conversation to wake herself from her troubled dream.

"How pleased you look, Miss Watson. You have quite a colour," she said.

Amy smiled.

"I am happy," she answered, softly, "because mother is happy—her baby is at home."

Vera looked up inquiringly. "My brother Tom!" explained Amy, "our baby and pet. He comes very seldom. I want you to see him."

"I shall be glad," Vera said, slowly. "How nice it sounds to have a brother! I knew what a joy a mother was"—she looked into the glowing fire—"but, except for her, I have always been alone, I think."

"You never had any brothers or sisters!" Amy asked.

Vera shook her head.

"No, mother always said I was her only joy—the one star that came to brighten the darkness of her life; and yet it is strange sometimes I seem to remember a boy, a playmate, I used to call a brother. I suppose it was all a dream."

Amy was silent—she was thinking.

"You are not happy after all," Vera said, suddenly. "There is a troubled look in your eyes. What is the matter!"

Amy smiled faintly, then her lips trembled.

"I am troubled," she replied, hurriedly, "but I keep it from mother. It is about Tom. He has something on his mind—he pretends he hasn't, but I know; and he is not well. He has been in bed all day, with a headache, he calls it. It would be nearer the truth if he called it heartache."

Vera rose and kissed the other.

"Don't vex yourself, dear," she whispered.

"Perhaps, after all, it is only your fancy."

Amy shook her head despondingly.

"He is not a bit like himself. As a rule he is so handsome, and he looks so drawn and old. I can't understand it."

Vera's heart suddenly seemed to stand still.

"What is your brother like!" she asked.

"Will you let me bring him upstairs, and introduce him to you!" cried Amy.

"If you like."

Amy flitted away, and Vera stood still gazing at the fire, feeling strangely excited. In another moment Amy had returned.

"This is my brother Tom, Miss Mortimer. Why, Tom, what is it!"

For Tom Watson had slunk back from the slender form standing on the hearthrug with outstretched hand, the firelight gleaming on the red gold of her hair, and a pure, lovely face. It was his angel of the morning, and he felt he could not meet her.

"It is the doormat," said Vera, coming gallantly to his rescue. "We catch our feet in it every time we come in. How do you do, Mr. Watson? I am pleased to know you."

Tom took the hand, and pressed it to his lips, while Amy went to examine the doormat.

Some strange intuition had led Vera to guess the truth, but even as she did so her heart sank. Amy and sweet-faced mother had given her such kind words, had treated her in a way that the girl was rarely treated, and it was for their sakes

she grieved. What a wreck to their happy home if the truth came out, or Rex Darnley refused to pardon!

"You have neuralgia, Mr. Watson," she said, quietly, while her thoughts were going on; "everybody seems to suffer from it now. What is the matter, Miss Watson!"

"I can't find anything wrong with this rug, but I will fetch a light and then see."

As they were alone Tom Watson bent forward, eagerly.

"To meet you again it is almost too good! I have thanked you all day in my heart for what you did this morning."

"And you are decided!" Vera asked, quietly.

"Yes—yes. I will go to Rex Darnley on my knees; I will beg him to hush up the affair; not for my sake, but for theirs. He cannot refuse—he must do it!"

"Where did you know this man!"

"I met him at the house of my employers. He took a fancy to me. I told him nothing of my surroundings; he does not know even that my mother lives here. My head was turned in London, and—Heaven forgive me!—I was ashamed of my angel mother and sister tolling like slaves to give me all they could. Rex Darnley made a friend of me. I was welcome to his rooms. Although a stern foe he is a staunch friend. He is rich—his money is at his friend's disposal. I borrowed, he lent—again and again—always with kind advice. I will tell you my ruin—cards—I played unknown to him; I lost. I was ruined—he was away, started for Italy, they told me. With merciless men to deal with, tempted, mad with my folly, I listened to the advice of those who led me astray. I wrote Rex Darnley's name across a bill—the rest you know."

"Have courage!" whispered Vera, putting her hand on his shoulder. "You will go to this man soon—when!"

"To-night."

"Hush! here is your sister."

Amy knelt down, and examined the rug carefully.

"It is very odd! I can see nothing," she declared. "I think you must have made some mistake, Vera."

"Yes, dear," Vera turned towards her, "perhaps I did; but come in, and sit down. Maggie will be back directly, and we will have a cup of tea together before I have to go down to the theatre. Mr. Watson likes tea, I am sure—all nice people do."

And so chatting easily Vera set the man at his comfort, and Amy forgot the episode of the doormat as they grew merry over the cup of tea.

CHAPTER VII.

"GOOD business, boss."

Mr. Nathaniel De Mortimer nodded his head; shortly he was waiting at the wing, peering through a hole in the scenery at the crammed house.

"Wonders will never cease," observed the other, the low comedian of the company; "if I'd been offered ten to one against our taking a blessed shilling in this village hole I'd have jumped at it."

Still Mr. De Mortimer made no remark; he was counting the people as well as he could while Vera trilled out her sorrowful lay. As she finished a perfect hurricane of applause followed. The low comedian shrugged his shoulders.

"That girl will be a gold-mine to you, governor," he declared. "Any of the swells here to-night!"

Mr. De Mortimer rubbed his hands.

"The same three," he said, promptly; "they have been every night regular. I suppose Delane fetches them, Bigby."

Mr. Bigby shook his head.

"Not a bit of it. I ain't running down Delane; I think she's a very good, useful woman, but she ain't the attraction of this 'ere show. She can't hold a candle to the little 'un."

De Mortimer's brow met,

"Don't go filling Vera's head with that sort of stuff, or she will give me some trouble. She isn't the easiest person in the world to manage, although she is so gentle and timid."

"It would have pleased your poor misanthropic heart, De Mortimer, to see her girl's success."

The manager growled something and walked away. Vera came off the stage at the same time; she had a smile and a kind word for Biggby; many a time he had shown her little attentions. She walked to her dressing-room thoughtfully.

This was the third night of *Cinderella*. De Mortimer had cancelled all his other engagements and settled to remain in Bentley for the remainder of the week. The news of the Earl's patronage had spread, and all the people from near and far flocked to the performance. To De Mortimer's delight, Maggie Delane's surprise, and Vera's pain, the three men of the Bascom-wold party came every night. Young as she was, Vera was too well versed in the world's knowledge not to understand what the company meant by their sly hints and winks; and apart from that, the sight of Rex Darnley's cold handsome face distressed her, knowing as she did the secret of poor Tom Watson's crime.

It was of this she was thinking as she dressed for the ball-room scene. A day had gone; this was the end of the second, and Tom Watson had not sought his interview with his friend. He was ill—too ill to move from his bed—his mind tortured by the thought of his crime becoming discovered. What was to be done? Vera shrank from the pain that must be inflicted on Amy by taking her into the end confidence, yet she must soon know all; and with her loving pride in her brother Vera judged too rightly it would almost break her heart.

"Miss Sobersides!" cried Maggie, as she rushed in just to take a peep at her handsome image. "You look as grave as a judge, Vera. I say, isn't this too awfully jolly? It seems like a fairy story. I hear we have a tremendous money house. Nathaniel ought to give us both a gold medal; we certainly have saved the show."

Vera only smiled, her thoughts were all with Tom.

Last night as she had walked home, Rex Darnley again had walked beside her. She did not know why, but the presence of this man thrilled her most strangely, the tones of his voice stirred her heart. Once she had been on the point of breaking forth about Tom, but even as she did so Rex had spoken some extra harsh words called up by the conversation turning on deception, and her courage failed her.

She went on the stage again, sang, and finished the performance.

When she was dressed in her hat and cloak she found the escort of the three gentlemen, immaculate in their evening dress, waiting.

Vera did not give her hand; she simply bowed, and would have passed on, but Mr. De Mortimer stepped forward with a frown.

"Vera, his lordship—these gentlemen—do you the honour to wish to escort you home?"

By the light of the solitary lamp hanging over the door Rex Darnley saw the girl's lips tremble and the sight pained him.

"Please do not think you are bound to accept it, Miss De Mortimer," he said.

"You are very kind," Vera said, coldly. "If my father has no objection how can I have any?"

Nathaniel De Mortimer frowned. The Earl pressed forward eagerly.

"Will you take my arm, Miss De Mortimer?" he asked.

Maggie Delane and Mr. Motte were already on ahead.

Vera hesitated an instant, then passed her hand through the Earl's arm.

"She would not have done that for me," was Rex Darnley's unspoken thought.

He dropped behind, and listened to Mr. De Mortimer's bluster, pompous boastings in silence.

Vera was a puzzle to him. He could not reconcile the idea of so fair, so eminently pure and gentle a girl being the child of so coarse

and common a man. Her coldness, the distaste she openly expressed for the forced acquaintance with the Earl and his guests, unconsciously gratified him. He found himself shivering at all remarks about this young actress, whom he had never seen before three days ago.

The Earl walked along in silence; his heart beat strangely at the touch of the small hand on his arm, and he could not repress a feeling of triumph at Vera's undisguised preference for his company.

"I cannot tell you how pleased I am to have made your acquaintance, Miss De Mortimer," he said, eagerly, after a long pause.

"Thank you, my lord," answered Vera.

"I trust we shall meet often after you leave here," continued the Earl.

"It is scarcely likely, my lord," Vera replied, quietly. "Our lives run far apart."

"Nowadays art is recognised," Lord Vivian observed, with a smile. "You will be famous before long, Miss De Mortimer—I prophesy it! Rex Darnley, my friend, who is never known to flatter or praise, predicts a gigantic future for you."

"Mr. Darnley is very kind."

Vera's voice was cold as ice, yet she was inwardly in a fever of trouble. She was foolish, perhaps; but poor Tom Watson and his gentle mother and sister were ever before her. Vera had never received kindness such as Amy and Mrs. Watson had given her since her mother's death, and it touched her to the heart.

Lord Vivian glanced at her suddenly.

"I wonder why you dislike Rex so much!" he said, involuntarily.

Vera started.

"Dislike him, my lord! I can hardly say that; yet I always have a sort of fear when I am near him."

"Fear!" cried the Earl. "Why, Rex is the kindest man on earth—so gentle, so tender. He is my friend. He is the soul of honour, of chivalry—brave as a lion, pure as a woman!"

Vera's heart thrilled unconsciously at the Earl's enthusiasm.

"He has, at least, one staunch friend, my lord," she said, with a smile; then she added, hurriedly, "But he is not stern and hard—even cruel! He looks it."

Lord Vivian looked amazed.

"Cruel! Oh! Miss Mortimer, you do, indeed, read him wrongly. He is just and merciful; in fact, Rex is my ideal man."

They had reached the small house by this time, and in two minutes Rex and De Mortimer were with them; Maggie Delane and Mr. Motte were whispering apart.

"What is that about an ideal man?" inquired Rex as he came up.

Lord Vivian's face flashed in the moonlight. Vera spoke,—

"We were discussing a knight of chivalry, Mr. Darnley," she said, turning to him. "Lord Vivian, I am glad to say, still believes such things exist."

"Eric believes many strange things," Rex observed, with just a glance at Lord Vivian of intense good fellowship. "You must take all he tells you, Miss De Mortimer, with a grain of salt."

At that moment Mr. Motte joined them.

"I say, Eric, have you got your drag down here?"

"Yes. Why?" asked the Earl.

"Because I thought to-morrow we might, if it is fine, drive Miss Delane, Miss De Mortimer, and some of the other ladies over to Blackrock Castle. They would enjoy it."

"Oh! so much!" cried Maggie Delane, clasping her hands.

"I have the drag down here, Wenty, and I shall be delighted to lend it to you. Unfortunately I cannot offer to be one of the party. I must give up the day to-morrow to my steward."

"That is a pity, old man, by Jove it is!" exclaimed Mr. Motte.

"Yes, it is, indeed," chimed in Miss Delane.

"However, if the ladies are not afraid to trust

themselves to my care, Rex will answer for it I know something about driving."

"A little, Wenty," observed Rex, with a smile.

"So, Miss Delane and Miss De Mortimer, if you—"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Motte," Vera said, quietly. "I am afraid I cannot join your party to-morrow."

"Why, Vera?" broke out Maggie.

"Absurd!" began De Mortimer, angrily.

"Oh! Miss De Mortimer, I say, by Jove, that is a disappointment!"

"I am sorry to have to refuse, but I must," the girl said quietly; but Rex Darnley noticed that her great, lustrous eyes met her father's almost defiantly. "I have a great deal of work to do to-morrow."

"Well, it can't be helped," Maggie observed good-naturedly. "And there is no moving Vera when she once makes up her mind."

"Don't give me a bad character, Maggie," Vera said, with a faint smile. "I am sure Mr. Motte will understand how much I appreciate his kindness, and accept my apologies."

She bowed as she spoke.

"Oh! Miss De Mortimer. Of course."

"Then good-night," Vera turned, and held her hand to the Earl, who bowed low over it; then, urged by some strong feeling, she extended it to Rex Darnley, and for the first time their hands met.

A thrill of unspeakable delight ran through Rex as he held the slender fingers in his, and gazed into the depths of the star-like orbs.

Vera felt her cheeks grow warm with the glow of colour that came the next instant they had parted, and she was indoors, following Maggie Delane upstairs.

"Vera, why wouldn't you join the drive to-morrow?" demanded Maggie almost crossly.

Vera took off her hat and sat down.

"Don't be vexed, dear," she said, wearily, "but I could not. Maggie, I dread being too intimate with these great people; mother always warned me against it."

"As you like, old girl."

Miss Delane sat down to her supper composedly.

Vera took her place.

Beside her plate a little note was lying; she took it up and looked at it in surprise.

"Secrets!" laughed Maggie. "Well I'm jam going to get my slippers. Read your *billet doux*, Vera."

Vera tore open the envelope; inside, scrawled on a bit of paper with a pencil, were a few words:—

"I am ill, I cannot move from my bed; what am I to do? Amy guesses I am troubled; but, oh! she must not know if I can help to keep it from her! In two days more it will be too late. You saved me once, help me again! Only a word will be necessary; speak it as you pass my door. God bless you for your goodness."

"TOM WATSON."

When Maggie came back Vera was eating her supper quietly, and she chatted on as usual till they rose to go to rest.

They gathered their things together, and Maggie put out the light.

As they stood in the passage Vera spoke.—

"Maggie, one reason that I cannot join you to-morrow is that I have set myself a task to do, and whatever comes I will try and do it."

The last words were spoken clearly; they penetrated the half closed door of Tom Watson's room, and reached the ears of the poor fellow listening so eagerly for them. The girl's silvery voice was like heavenly music to his feverish brain, breathing as it did a promise of deliverance from the terrible dark bondage of fear that now enfolded him.

CHAPTER VIII.

"I don't know what to do, Rex."

The words were spoken by Lord Danmoor, eldest son to the Earl of Daly, and brother to the pretty Lady Anice.

The two men were in Lord Vivian's study smoking and talking.

"Do! If she were my sister I should soon know what to do—assert my authority. You are practically the head of your family, Danmoor; Anice should be brought to her bearings."

"She is unmanageable," said Lord Danmoor, shaking off the ashes of his cigar. "You know I came here on purpose to remonstrate with her over her extravagance, and all she does is to fling back in my teeth our father's expenditure in redeeming the estate. Folly and wickedness she calls it, while the poor old dad thought only of his honour and his father's name."

"Anice does not understand what honour means, Danmoor," Rex observed quietly.

Lord Danmoor was silent for a few moments. "Do you think Vivian is in earnest?" he asked.

"About Anice?"

Lord Danmoor nodded.

"It is impossible to say," Rex said, slowly; a vision of the Earl's eager face as he had bent towards Vera last night returning to him. "I think he admires her."

"Many men admire Anice," her brother replied, puffing out a cloud of tobacco. "I don't mind telling you, old fellow, that I am decidedly anxious. Anice should marry; she wears my mother to death. I can do nothing with her. I want to wash my hands of her altogether."

"I am not surprised; but you are too weak, Danmoor. You should show her that you are master, and—"

"May I come in?" cried a clear voice at the door, and Lady Anice appeared, looking like a piece of Dresden china in her dainty morning gown; her lips tightened a little as she saw Rex.

"Talking business! Well, I won't disturb you. I have a message to deliver to Lord Vivian from mamma. Can you tell me where he is?"

"Gone out for the day," Rex answered. "He has some complicated affairs to settle with his steward. I may see him in the course of the morning. Shall I deliver your mother's message?"

Lady Anice coloured just a little.

"Oh, no," she said, airily; "it was mere baggage, and can wait."

The truth was, she had no message at all; but she was overcome with a desire to know where the Earl was gone.

"I saw the drag out early. I thought, perhaps, he was arranging some drive for us."

"Did you," observed Rex, quietly. "Oh! Anice, now you are here, Danmoor and I want to talk seriously to you about—"

Lady Anice put her fingers in her ears.

"I won't listen!" she said, gaily, "Danmoor has done nothing but scold, mamma scolds, and now you, Rex; it is really too much."

And with a flutter of her laces and ribbons she was gone.

"You see," said Lord Danmoor, rising, "That's all one can get out of her. I believe she has no heart or sense."

"You wrong her; she has a great deal of the latter, though the former is wanting in her altogether. Where are you going now?"

"I want to ride over to a place somewhere near here, called the Gill; two fellows I know have taken it for the shooting—awfully good chaps. One is an old chum of mine; we were at Eton together. He has just come back from Australia; he went the voyage there and back to get his strength up after a nasty illness. Will you come with me! I should like to introduce you to Moretown and Drace."

"Thanks old fellow, I don't think I will come this morning! I want to have a quiet hour with my correspondence. Eric gave me up his 'den' for the purpose. Look at the mass of work I have before me!"

"Rex, you are a marvel—always slaving as if your life depended on it. What do you do!—and what on earth are all these letters about?"

"State secrets," laughed Rex; "but now, Danmoor, be off, I must tackle them. We

will put our heads together and devise some plan for bringing Miss Anice to her bearings! Aunt Eleanor is looking quite ill. Ta, ta, old boy."

Lord Danmoor lit another cigar, nodded his head to his cousin, and strode from the room—a broad-shouldered, plain young man, but with an earnest, honest look in his plain face that was worth all his sister's false, fair pretences.

Rex Darnley drew his chair up to the table and began to pore through his letters. He opened and read some quickly, and then took up a large blue envelope which he glanced at in surprise.

The contents were a long letter and a piece of paper, which, to his astonishment, he found to be a bill of promise, signed by himself. He gazed at it for some time, then put it down and took up the letter.

He was half-way through it, when a footman entered the room and handed him a note.

"The young person is waiting, sir," said the man.

Rex tore open the note.

"May I beg the favour of a few moments' conversation with you? Pray pardon the strange request, the urgency of my errand must be my excuse."

"VERA DE MORTIMER"

Rex half rose with a flush on his dark, handsome face.

"Where is the lady?" he asked, hurriedly.

"In the servants' hall, sir," the man answered, deferentially; but invariably curious while he spoke.

"The servants' hall," repeated Rex, with ill-suppressed vexation; then he was about to go and bring Vera away himself, but his common sense rose to the occasion.

"Kindly show the lady here, Johnson," he said, sinking into his chair again. His heart was beating wildly and his pulse was throbbing. He forgot even the astonishment that had seized him in the letter he was reading, his whole mind was taken up by Vera.

In another instant the footman had ushered in the slender, graceful form clad in black, the exquisite loveliness of the face hidden beneath a thick black veil. Johnson glanced at her as he went out, and took in the great mass of red golden hair with increased surprise as to who Mr. Darnley's visitor might be.

"Miss De Mortimer," Rex rose and stretched out his hand, "this is an agreeable surprise; have you walked here?"

"Yes," answered Vera, in a low voice, as she released her hand from his and took the chair he pushed forward.

She was agitated to a degree—all her courage deserted her again. She was almost on the point of making some excuse and departing, when the memory of Amy, her mother, and the poor wretched man whose future depended on her promise spurred her on.

"It is warm in here. Will you not loosen your veil?" asked Rex, as quietly as he could; he longed to see that fair face again, whose image haunted him.

Vera fastened the veil.

She was pale, and her eyes were eager.

"Mr. Darnley," she said, lifting her great lustrous orbs to his, "this is a strange proceeding, unorthodox to the last degree, but—but when you have heard the reason of my visit, perhaps you will pardon all that. I come to you as a suppliant."

"You!" Rex rose and half moved towards her eagerly. "What can I do for you?"

"I want nothing for myself," answered Vera.

"I—"

She stopped, then went on, quickly,—

"Mr. Darnley, you have a friend named Watson?"

"Yes," said Rex, surprised, "I have."

"It is on his account I come. He—you have been deceived, wronged, by him. He meant to have come to you himself this morning, but the mental agony he is enduring has made him ill—he cannot move. I was fortunate enough to

save him from seeking his own death two days ago, now I come to you to plead for him. It is in your hands whether his life henceforth is marred or is started afresh. He has committed a crime!"

"Go on," said Rex, coldly.

He resented, he scarcely knew why, this pleading tone for another. His eyes were riveted on her lovely face, flushed now with excitement.

"He got into monetary distress. You were not there to help him. He forged your name!"

Rex uttered an exclamation, and turned to his letters. He examined the bill now carefully, then let his hand drop.

"Well," was all he said.

Vera's heart fell at the cold tone.

"That man has a mother, a sister. They know nothing of this—the disgrace will kill them. For their sake I—"

"What is this man to you?" demanded Rex, almost harshly.

Vera turned white, her heart beat wildly.

"I do not understand you," she said, in faint, low tones.

"Why should you plead for him? Does not Tom Watson know me well? Why could he not write to me? Why should you come?"

Vera rose; her hands were trembling.

"I told you he was ill. I alone know his secret, and I—"

"I see," Rex nodded his head, his breast was surging with mad thoughts. "He is your lover?"

Vera shrank back.

"You insult me!" she gasped. "Oh! why did I come!"

"Insult you?" he drew nearer to her, his eyes shining; "insult you—you who are to me the purest, the fairest of Heaven's creatures! No, Vera, you judge me wrongly. Though I have known you but three days, those days answer for years! You have never left my mind—you—"

"Mr. Darnley!" the girl stood upright. "You have no right to address these words to me, but I see I must expect it. My mind was full of that poor man's sufferings when I came here. I forgot that by so doing I could lay myself open to humiliation!"

"Humiliation?" repeated Rex, hotly, then he drew back. "Forgive me, I apologise. Something urged me to speak like that. Go back to Watson; tell him he is pardoned; the affair shall go no farther. Any awkward questions that may arise I will answer. For his mother and sister's sake I will forget everything; tell him to come to me. There is good in him if he is led in the right way. Are you satisfied?"

"Yes," Vera said, simply.

She felt the tears were starting to her eyes, and she turned aside and fastened her veil over her face.

"Now you have succeeded, may I not hope to also?" continued Rex, advancing with outstretched hands. "Will you not forgive my mad words?"

Vera said nothing, but put her hand in his.

Rex would have given all his wealth to have snatched that lovely form to his heart and encircled it with his arms.

"I will, if you will allow me, stroll down to the village with you?" he said, quietly. "We can go out through this door."

He led Vera along a passage to a side entrance—he was anxious she should escape the sharp gaze of the ladies' eyes, and the scandal that would arise.

"This shall be a secret between us, Miss De Mortimer," he said, as they passed through the grounds. "No one shall know of poor Tom's weakness here but ourselves."

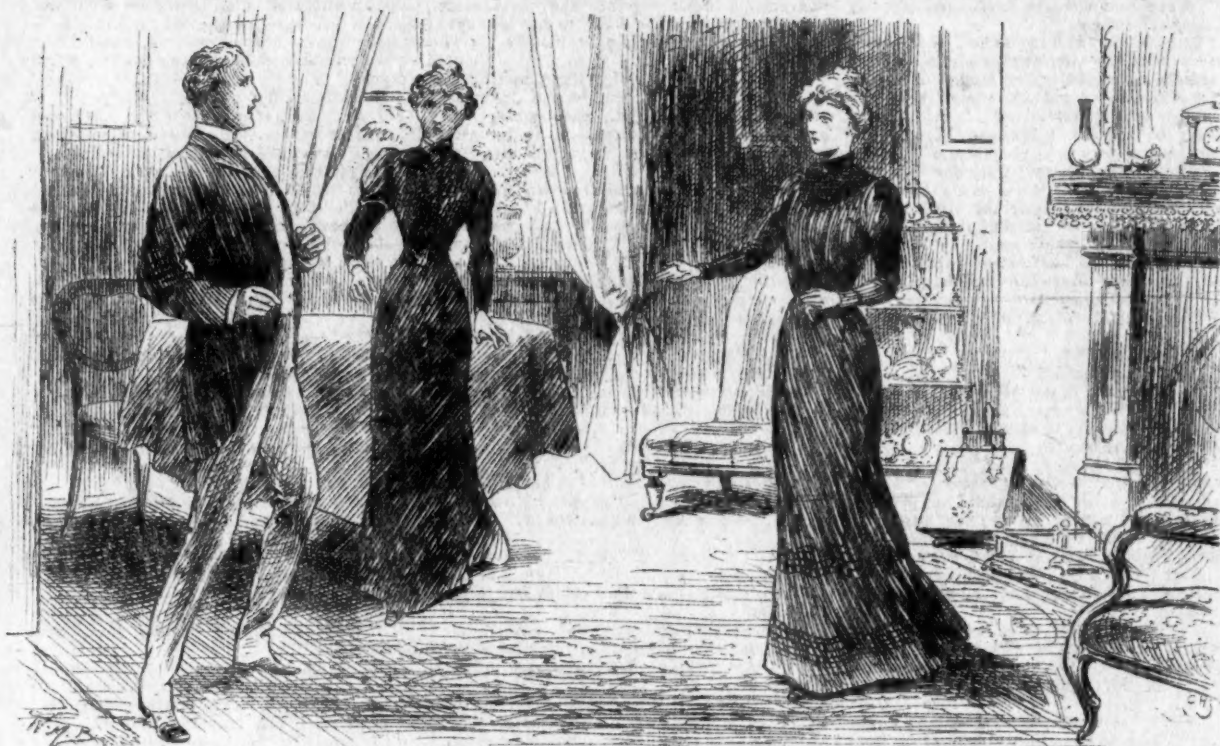
"You are good," Vera murmured; she felt almost faint now the task was done.

Rex feasted his eyes on her little, slender form, and on the delicate features seen through the veil, his heart still beating wildly.

What was there about this girl that thrilled him so?

Just as they were going towards one of the lodge-gates a figure on horseback approached them. It was Lord Vivian.

"Why, Rex!" he cried, in surprise, then he



"WHY, TOM, WHAT IS THE MATTER?" SAID AMY.

checked himself. He gazed at Vera for an instant.

"It is Miss De Mortimer, is it not?"

"It is," replied Rex, briefly.

He felt vexed the Earl had met them, and on his side the Earl was strangely annoyed to see those two together.

"Have you been seeing the gardens?" he asked.

"I had a message to deliver to Mr. Darnley, my lord," Vera said, quietly; "that accounts for my presence here."

"Beaconsfield is honoured," said Lord Vivian.

He vaulted from his horse, and gave the reins to a groom near at hand.

"Will you not let me show you the grounds now you are here?" he asked, eagerly.

"Thank you, no. I must return home."

"Then may I escort you?" persisted the Earl.

Rex frowned; they were at the gate by this time.

"Again I must refuse, my lord," Vera answered, gently. "Will you permit me to say good-bye here?"

She held out her hand to Rex, then to the Earl.

"Not good-bye," cried the Earl, quickly; "only au revoir."

Vera smiled, bowed, and walked away, Rex and Lord Vivian stood silent, watching her as she moved along the road carrying herself with the grace of an Andalusian.

"You are a sly dog, Master Rex!" exclaimed the Earl, as they both turned back.

Rex frowned.

"What do you mean, Eric?" he inquired, coldly.

"You refuse to join me on a plea of business this morning. I am not surprised now I see what that business was; but *entre nous*, old fellow, I think you might have told me she was coming."

"Miss De Mortimer's visit surprised me as

much as it does you. It was quite unexpected," observed Mr. Darnley.

The Earl looked at him for an instant with a cloud on his face.

"What did she want!—more patronage, or—"

"I am not at liberty to tell you what Miss De Mortimer's business was."

The Earl flushed.

"We have had few secrets, Rex," he said, hurriedly, "and this—"

"Is one I have given my word of honour to guard closely."

"As you will."

The Earl turned away humbly, but the next instant he was back.

"Our friendship is too old to be severed, or even crossed, by a girl of whom we know nothing, Rex."

"So I think," said Rex, grasping the other's hand as in a vice. "Believe me, old chap, if I could I would tell you all about it, but my lips are sealed. I must not speak."

Vera walked back to the lodgings in a state of curious excitement.

She had succeeded. She was carrying back the tidings of more than life to Tom Watson. Yet though the knowledge of this was a joy to her, she nevertheless longed from the bottom of her heart that she had not gone to Rex Darnley.

Those strange, impassioned words he had uttered rang in her ears, making her heart beat wildly with a new and wondrous delight, yet as the delight was born it died in the flood of shame and hurt pride that overwhelmed her.

"What must he have thought!" she mused, agitatedly, as she hurried along. "This is what mother warned me against. Friendship between such men and myself means empty flattery and insult. But"—her cheeks flushed—"the words he uttered were not insults. He looked in earnest—he could not have been acting! I must not meet him again! I could not! Oh! how I wish we were leaving this

village—I long to be gone now! I feel somehow as though destiny held some pain for me here!"

She reached the lodgings. Amy was busy at work; Mrs. Watson was out.

"Are you tired, Vera? If not will you sing a little! Tom would enjoy it so much."

The young fellow was lying on a couch in the small back room. His face was deathly white, his eyes glowing with the eagerness and dread of one almost spent with anxiety.

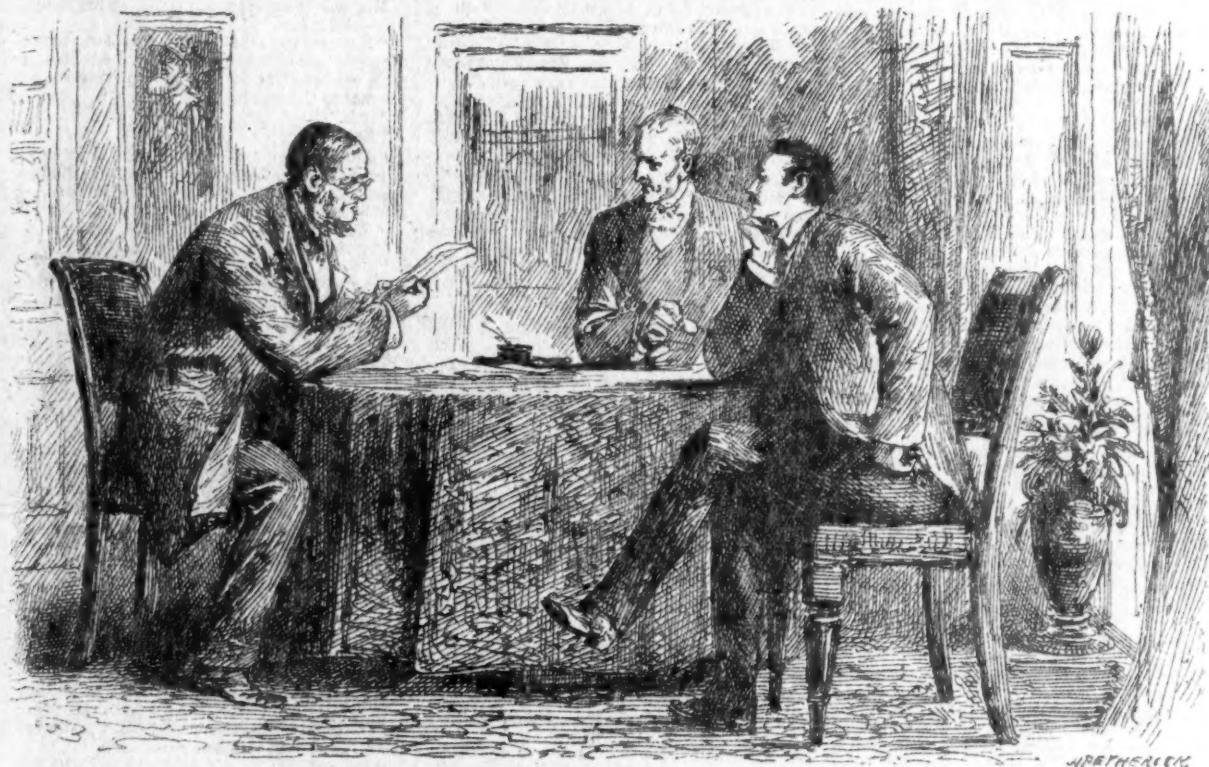
At sight of him Vera lost all thoughts about herself.

"I am not in the least tired," she said, gently, removing her veil and hat, and going to the piano. "I am in the proud position of having accomplished a task. Yes, Mr. Watson, I assure you," she added, answering his mute look, "I had some work to do this morning. At one time, I confess, I thought it would vanquish me; but you will be glad to hear I have succeeded utterly, completely succeeded."

Then she sat down and began to sing softly, keeping her eyes carefully turned from Tom Watson, who had covered his face with his hands to hide the tears that would come.

(To be continued.)

In many parts of Normandy "spent bark" or "tan" is used by peasants as fuel. They get the tan for little or nothing, and then by means of a very primitive sort of press they make it into cakes, which very much resemble peat in appearance. It is then dried in shelves erected on the walls of the house and garden, and protected from the rains by little sloping roofs. These tan cakes make excellent fuel, and in Caudebec, a little place between Rouen and Havre, it is much used. It seems that thousands of tons of tan are thrown away annually, which at small cost might be converted into excellent fuel.



"I THINK IT IS GENUINE!" SAID THE LAWYER, SLOWLY.

VERNON'S DESTINY.

CHAPTER IX.

LORD CHARTERIS was not far from eighty, but clear-headed, and with all his faculties, save that the weight of years had somewhat dimmed his sight. He lived all the year round now at his old estate in Gloucestershire, which he dearly loved.

His grandsons made their home with him, and a goodly sprinkling of granddaughters as well, so that the household at Charteris Hall was a very numerous one, and the relationships of the family to each other not a little puzzling.

Charteris himself was strictly entailed, and must pass with the title to the old lord's eldest son, who was stationed at Ceylon with his regiment, in which his two boys already held commissions.

This branch of the family was little known in Gloucester. Tom Charteris had barely spent a year at home since he was twenty. He had married a high-born heiress, and led an exemplary life. Taken altogether, his relations were intensely proud of him, but stood a little in awe of his many virtues.

The next son had been "unfortunate," that was the chronicle of him in the family annals. The eldest niece and nephews could just remember him, and recall the time when he was a frequent visitor at the Hall. Now his name was never mentioned, and it was generally supposed he was dead.

Dr. Charteris the third son, lived in the village, and his children were the idols of the place. If only Nell, the eldest son, had been his grandfather's heir, there would have been public rejoicings; but the cousins in Ceylon quite shut out Nell from all such chances; and so he had followed in his father's footsteps, and was now his duly qualified assistant, making his home chiefly at the Hall, where his eldest sister was housekeeper, and a tribe of cousins looked up to him as an elder brother.

"Meg," said Mr. Charteris, one day, meeting his sister in the village, "there's been an awful railway accident. I am just off to the station; the father is there already."

"I had better come with you," said Meg, who was a born nurse; "you are sure to want help."

"I want something more. It is five miles to a hospital; don't you think his lordship would let me turn some of the empty rooms at the Hall into an accident ward?"

Meg shook her head.

"I don't think so; he is so particular about Charteris, and what guests it receives."

"Well, I mean to ask him. I have sent up the mother to plead for me. Now, Meg, are you sure you can stand it? It's pretty bad, they say."

"Yes," returned Margaret, quietly; "I am quite ready. You had better accept my help, Nell, for you will get no other unless you send for a hospital nurse; all the women here good for anything have their hands full. Where was the accident?"

"In the tunnel; but they will have brought the sufferers on to Charteris Station."

In perfect silence the brother and sister walked on. Their father met them in the booking-office, the crowd made way for them to pass. Very loyal was the feudal respect paid by the whole village to the honoured name of Charteris.

"This is the worst," said the doctor, hurriedly; "look here, Nell, see to these two."

Two still forms lay on the table of the ladies' waiting-room—a man and a girl. They had been found in a senseless heap, half crushed by the debris of the carriage.

Meg took some water and a sponge, and began to bathe the girl's white brow, and chafe the too-cold hands.

A start from her brother made her look up.

"Gay Vernon, by all that's wonderful! Meg, don't you pity Lady Dedma!"

"Yes, Nell. You must restore him for her sake."

"I'll do my best. This destroys the father's theory that the two were travelling together."

Vernon hates all women, and he has no relations except his mother. They must have just met casually. I'm afraid he is badly hurt."

"You must send him to the Hall. Grandfather likes the Vernons. He will be delighted to welcome one of them."

"And the girl?"

"She must come too. I can't give her up. Something in her face touches me, and she is quite alone."

"Feel in her pocket, and see if there is no clue to her identity. Her friends may be in an agony of suspense about her."

Meg obeyed. She produced a handkerchief marked "L.H." in white embroidery, and a letter addressed to Miss Travers, Beauville-sur-Mer.

Nell shook his head.

"I don't know the name of Travers at all. Perhaps she was a stranger, poor child."

"See," said Meg, eagerly, "she is coming to."

The dark eyes opened slowly, and fixed themselves on Meg with a gaze of most piteous entreaty.

"Oh, let me go!" pleaded Lit; "let me go, or we shall be too late to save Miss Charteris."

She sank back then; the brief gleam of consciousness was over, and she had relapsed into a death-like swoon.

Meg and her brother exchanged glances.

"What can it mean?"

"I thought we were the only Charterises in England, and she spoke of 'saving Miss Charteris.' There was such an agony in her voice I could not doubt her word; it is an enigma."

"I am Miss Charteris," said Meg, in a bewildered tone, "and I am in no danger, Nell."

"I think she had better be taken to the Hall. It is just possible Vernon may know who she is when he comes to his senses, and I don't like the poor child to be taken off to a strange hospital."

But long before Sir Gay could be questioned poor Lit's identity was discovered. Major Marton's telegram of inquiry described his sister-in-law too minutely for any mistake.

"She is Miss Travers, and she was going to Chesham to visit her sister, Mrs. Morton. You'd better keep the last fact to yourself, Meg. I don't know the reason, but our respected grandfather has a peculiar antipathy to the name of Morton."

"He's an old Indian officer. I think he was Uncle Charles's friend, and mixed up in his disappearance. Anyway, Meg, don't mention the name before Lord Charteris. It is like showing red to a mad bull, and it's cruel to excite men at his time of life."

"But if he questions me?"

"Say our patient is a Miss Travers, a young lady who came from France on a visit to her married sister. That will quite content him."

"Do you think Miss Travers is in danger?"

"No, and I have sent word to that effect to her brother-in-law, but I am uneasy about her. Meg, there is some strange oppression on the brain."

Meg sat up with the patient that night, and she felt Nell was right. There were two or three fitful returns to consciousness, and in each the poor girl spoke of her fear she should be "too late"; in each she pleaded to be "let go, or she could never save Miss Charteris for Sir Guy."

"My dear," said Meg, bending over her, and speaking soothingly, as though to a fractious child, "you are making a mistake. I am Miss Charteris, and no danger threatens me; I am quite safe!"

Lit's eyes wandered over the calm, still face.

"You are not Nell Charteris," she said, gravely, "not the Nell I have promised to save from peril. She has blue eyes, and she is like a child, and I think Sir Guy loves her."

Meg thought she was on the track of a mystery, but even as she watched the light of reason faded out of Lit's eyes, and before she spoke again Miss Charteris knew she was delirious. At the first dawn of day the doctor came to see how it fared with his patient. He and Nell had spent the night with Sir Guy; the other injured passengers had been removed either to their own homes or the nearest hospital; the father and son had only these two cases left on their hands.

"Brain fever," was his prompt verdict, "and it will go badly with her, for she is half-worn out now with anxiety. Major Merton is a rich man, but I should be inclined to say poverty had something to do with reducing Miss Travers to this state of weakness."

"Shall you send for him?"

"I think not. A brother-in-law is not a very near relation, and if I summoned him, Miss Travers would have to be moved from here. My father would never forgive me if I allowed Major Merton or his family to cross the threshold of Charteris Hall."

"But, Meg, how have they injured grandpapa to make him hate them so?"

"He never saw them in his life, and—but I can't explain it to you, Meg. You must do the best you can for this poor child. I don't suppose she has ever heard the name of Charteris, so she is quite innocent of offending his lordship."

"She had heard it. Father, what do you think were her first words?"

"How can I guess?"

"Let me go, or I shall be too late to save Miss Charteris." I told her I was Miss Charteris, but she shook her head, and said, 'you are not Nell; she has blue eyes and golden hair.'"

"I daresay she has."

"Papa!" cried Meg, "what do you mean? You speak almost as though there was such a person as Nell Charteris."

"So there is."

"Papa."

"And if Miss Travers is mixed up with her I would have cut off my right hand sooner than have brought her here. If your grandfather hears the name he will work himself into a passion, and at his age it might be fatal. You will need to be very cautious, Meg."

"I will; but, papa, can you trust me?"

"I do, implicitly."

"But I want to know who Nell Charteris is, and if she is any relation to us!"

"Why ask such questions, Meg? You will never see Nell Charteris, and Miss Travers once gone, probably never hear the name again."

"But I want to understand it, papa."

"You are a true daughter of Eve, but I can trust you, Meg. Nell Charteris is the only child of my late brother Charles."

"I never knew Uncle Charles was married."

"He married," then paused, "some one his family could not acknowledge, and the match made him an alien from us. Ask no more questions, Meg; the subject is a sore one."

"But, papa—"

"Meg, do let well alone."

"I must ask you two things."

"Well?"

"May I tell her?"

"If you like."

"And can this Nell Charteris be in any danger? Because, to hear Miss Travers speak, makes one think that she is in some awful peril."

"It is only the poor child's disordered imagination. Don't trouble your head about it, dear."

"I won't," said Meg, staunchly; but it is a promise easier made than kept, for all through the long hours in the sick-room her thoughts would wander to that other daughter of the house of Charteris who, for her mother's sins, was an alien from her kindred, her very name unknown among them.

She would listen to poor Lit's ravings until she fancied she almost understood the story.

Isola (who Isola might be Meg had no idea) was cruel and reckless; she meant to sacrifice Nell to Rex, and only Lit or Sir Guy could prevent it.

But for that promise to her father, but for the strange way in which their history was linked with that of the unknown Nell, Meg would have taken the law into her own hands, and have written to Major Merton, telling him all she knew.

The rector of the parish sent daily bulletins to Merton Park, and Mrs. Merton had written a gracious note of thanks, informing him it was impossible for her to leave home in her husband's absence, and that she was perfectly satisfied her sister was in good hands.

"A cool person, that," said Dr. Charteris, sarcastically. "Makes the trouble of her sister's illness over to perfect strangers without saying so much as 'by your leave.' I should hate that woman; I always do hate people with outlandish names, and Isola is the worst I've heard."

Meg said nothing. It was another link in the chain of evidence poor Lit's ramblings had given her. If Mrs. Merton were the 'Isola' of her sister's delirium, Miss Charteris was more than content for her to remain away from Charteris Hall.

"Meg," said her brother one morning, about five days after the accident, "I want you to come and talk to Sir Guy. I told you consciousness was gradually returning. Well, to-day he seems to have thrown off every remnant of his illness, and to be himself again. But when I told him he had been here five days he seemed overwhelmed; he wanted to set off at once, and asked if Major Merton had not been here to see his sister-in-law. It seems Vernon and Miss Travers were travelling together after all, and I fancy that poor child is right when she says in her ravings they had to rescue our unknown kinswoman from some dire peril. Now, I saw something about the young lady in the *Times* yesterday. I haven't it in my heart to tell Vernon myself, and yet he ought to know it, as it may save him a wildgoose chase and a bitter disappointment. Will you tell him for me?"

"But what is it?"

Nell took up the *Times* and pointed to a short announcement in the first column.

"On the 24th inst., at the parish church, Kensington, Reginald Denzell, late captain of the 95th Regiment, to Helen, only child and heiress of the late Colonel Charles Charteris, and granddaughter of Lord Charteris of Charteris Manor."

Meg read it through, and stared at her brother in blank dismay.

"The very day after the accident then; but for that they would have been in time. Oh, Nell! it can't be that Denzell who grandfather said was a disgrace to the profession of soldier!"

"It is."

"But—"

"He is a scoundrel, the sort of man no sister of mine should even bow to; but her guardians must have been shamefully remiss, for you see she has married him."

"Poor child!"

Meg sighed.

"I don't know that it is surprising. Her mother had a history, you know, and her marriage with my uncle wrecked his life. I suppose her fortune was the attraction."

"And Sir Guy?"

"I can't tell him," said Nell, decisively. "He has never said a word to make me think so, and yet I feel certain he loves Helen Charteris as his own soul, and that his one object was to save her from this scoundrel."

Meg thought she had never seen a more attractive face than the baronet's; he was sitting by the fire in his dressing-room when Nell took her in. "I think you will like to talk to my sister, Vernon. She can tell you of the inquiries about you much better than I can."

Sir Guy turned to Meg with a smile, and Nell, who had a man's hatred of painful scenes, hastened out of the room.

"Lady Decima knows you are better," began Meg; "she has been suffering from rheumatism or she would have come to you herself. We have written every day."

"You have been most kind. I know that, under Heaven, your brother has saved my life. I little thought when we were together at Oxford of where our next meeting would be."

"Miss Travers is still delicious, so I think it useless for you to see her."

"Do you mean her people have not removed her—that they have actually left her with perfect strangers?"

"We have been glad to do all we could. We are very much taken with Miss Travers."

"She is a good, honest child—a wonder she is so, considering what her surroundings have been. I know Mrs. Merton is wanting in most womanly qualities, but I did think she had some affection for her own family. The idea of her leaving her sister to struggle between life and death among strangers!"

Meg felt uncomfortable; she knew the secret of the strong man before her, and she must try to hide from him that she knew it. It was a hard task.

"My father thought from the very first there was some anxiety pressing upon Miss Travers' mind. Do you know what it was?"

"I think I do."

Meg went on with more confidence now.

"I believe this dread has retarded her progress. Whenever she speaks at all it is of Nell Charteris and some terrible danger which threatens her. I know one should never attach importance to the ravings of delirium, but in this case, the name being our own, I felt strangely interested, and I consulted my father. He says the Miss Charteris spoken of is our first cousin."

"Whom you have disowned?" said Gay, hotly. "Miss Charteris, she is one of the purest, noblest souls you ever knew. If her simplicity is sullied, her innocence destroyed, by Mrs. Merton's will, it will be the marbling of one of the sweetest creatures Heaven ever made."

"I never knew of her existence till the other day, so you must not say that I have disowned her. Indeed, I am only sorry for her."

"She does not need your pity."

"I fear she will need pity all too much, for she has taken her fate into her own hands. The very day after you were brought here she married Reginald Denzell."

In common kindness she kept her eyes on the ground that he might not think her spying on his grief. The pause seemed to Meg of interminable length, the silence almost terrified her; and yet, when Sir Guy spoke, she would have wished

It had continued unbroken, for all the fire and animation had died out of his voice.

It was full of a dread despair as he uttered three words,—"Heaven help her!" Then, before she had realised what was coming, he had fallen senseless at her feet.

CHAPTER X.

It was a month altogether before Charteris Hall lost its invalids; then Sir Guy Vernon was well enough to return home to the Grange, and Lit declared she was quite strong, and must make her way back to France, for Merton Park was shut up, the Major had gone abroad on diplomatic business, and his pretty wife was established in a bijou villa in town, looking forward to the delights of the London season, so that Lit's visit to her relations was no longer practicable. She had spent her holidays in being ill, she said, and must now take up work again.

Dr. Charteris told her she was not fit for it; then he sent his wife up to the Hall, and the gentle, motherly woman persuaded Lit to promise to spend two or three weeks at the quaint house in the village which had been a wedding-gift from Lord Charteris to his third son. The Doctor looked at his wife with a half smile when she announced the success of her mission.

"Then you have made up your mind to Miss Travers for a daughter-in-law, Nellie! You know that's what it will end in!"

Mrs. Charteris laughed.

"You are a veritable match-maker!"

"I have eyes, my dear, and I can't help seeing Nell has lost his heart."

"I like her," said the kindly mother. "She has such a sweet face; and I think she has had very little kindness or sunshine in her life. I am not afraid of her making my boy unhappy!"

Dr. Charteris sighed.

"Never go match-making for your children, Nellie. It is what my father did for Charles. But for that he would never have been so bitter about the wife he chose."

"What has become of that poor child?"

The Doctor shrugged his shoulders.

"Mr. Denzil is in London (he has dropped the 'Captain' now), and living in grand style. I suppose he is counting on the first instalment of his wife's income!"

"Surely if he owes all his wealth to her he must at least treat her tolerably!"

"It is not in his nature to treat anything well that is in his power. I tell you, Nellie, I would rather see one of our girls in her coffin than have to think of her at the mercy of Reginald Denzil."

"I wish you would call on him!"

"Why?"

"It would show him she had some one to care how she was treated; and your father need never hear of it!"

She urged the point so much that the Doctor yielded. He went up to town for the express purpose of seeing how it fared with his brother's child; but the first surprise that awaited him was to find Mr. Denzil in bachelor chambers, and to learn from his servant that Mrs. Denzil was in the country.

The Doctor sent up his card with a request to be favoured with his niece's address. The card came down endorsed with this courteous message: "Mrs. Denzil, having spent her life so far without any relations, has no desire to be troubled by their advances now that she is safe and secure under the protection of her husband."

Dr. Charteris felt surprised. He had fancied a man whose social reputation was as shady as Denzil's would jump at a reconciliation with the family of a noble. He thought a moment, and then drove to the lawyers, who were Helen's co-trustees.

He saw the head of the firm and asked him for Mrs. Denzil's address. The solicitor, who knew him well, waxed confidential.

"That marriage is one of the blackest things I ever heard of. By your poor brother's will the girl could marry any one she pleased after

she was eighteen. No one in the world has any power to interfere, and yet I would stake my professional reputation on the assertion that Helen Charteris never married that man of her own free will."

"She did marry him!"

"Sure enough, worse luck. He brought her here not two hours afterwards, with a copy of the certificate in his hand. She signed a power of attorney, so that he could act for her in all things. I tried to ascertain if it was her own wish, and she declared it was. In the face of her statement I was powerless to object, and yet I felt all was not right. I knew something was wrong, and yet I could not put my finger on the flaw."

"He would not dare to be unkind to her."

"He would dare most things, I fancy. It's a strange thing for a husband not five weeks married to come to London as a bachelor."

"Where has he left her?"

"I have not the slightest idea."

"But he must give out some statement! Surely inquiries are made sometimes as to her whereabouts; and I suppose he treats a few people more civilly than he does me!"

"The account given out is that she caught a very bad cold on her honeymoon, and has to spend the rest of the winter in Devonshire."

"That sounds feasible enough, only he ought not to have left her."

"He gives colour to his story by leaving town every week from Friday to Monday. It is presumed he joins his wife—in Devonshire."

"You don't believe it?"

"I don't."

"Why not?"

"Because one Sunday when he was said to be in Devonshire, I met him at Richmond which is rather a different locality."

"What is to be done?"

"Nothing."

"But hang it all am I to stand by and see that poor girl neglected and ill-treated! She is my own niece, remember, and if she has been brought up a stranger to me it is not my fault!"

"My good friend, remember we have not the slightest proof to go upon. Mrs. Denzil may adore her husband, and enjoy periods of intense domestic happiness when he is with her; the Richmond adventure stands on my unsupported testimony. Mr. Denzil gives out he is in London to settle his affairs, and take a house for his wife. Either of these laudable objects may have led him to Richmond."

"I believe you are trying to make excuses for him."

"I am not; I detect the man as much as you do; rather more, I fancy, because I have seen his wife, but I can't help seeing that we have not a title of proof against him, and that by trying to prove we had we should do him not the least harm, and probably make that poor child's life all the harder!"

"Well, you must see her when the money becomes due!"

"No. Mrs. Denzil having given her husband a sufficient power of attorney; his receipt will be quite sufficient discharge to me for the money paid over. Humanely speaking, I have no more chance of seeing your niece than you have."

"You say she is pretty?"

"She bids fair to become one of the most beautiful women in England."

"Then surely he will be good to her! If she is beautiful he may have loved her face as well as her fortune!"

"He loved another face, unluckily, as is too well known to Dr. Charteris."

The Doctor shuddered.

"I wish you wouldn't talk like that; you put all kinds of awful ideas into my head. If he keeps her invisible much longer I shall think he's murdered her."

"He will never do that."

"Why not! You seem to think him bad enough for anything!"

"But that particular wickedness would rob him of five thousand a-year. The moment his wife dies her fortune goes from him. His

greatest object ought to be to keep her in health."

"And you think I can do nothing!"

"Nothing at all."

"If I write to her?"

"He would intercept the letter."

"Well, I haven't done much good in this journey. My wife will say I have failed completely."

"You had better try and adopt the view that Mrs. Denzil is perfectly happy, but her health really requires a warmer climate. If you can persuade yourself of that your mind will be more at ease."

"And you'll keep a watch on Denzil?"

"I'll do my best." The lawyer hesitated, then he added, with most unprofessional feeling in his voice, "You see, Dr. Charteris, I knew the young lady's mother, and I always thought your brother Charles happy to win her, in spite of all it cost him for her sake. You may rely upon my doing my utmost for your niece."

It was not encouraging, but the Doctor could do no better. He had to return to Charteris, having very little results to boast of for his visit.

He found Lena at the Rosery, and there was no hiding from her the state of the case.

"I don't think he will be unkind to her," she said, simply, "only he can never care for her. Dr. Charteris, I wonder you are so kind to me. Don't you know it is my sister who has brought all this trouble upon your niece?"

"Your sister is not you."

Lit blushed painfully.

"I wish Isola would go home and live with us while the Major is away."

"She is not likely to. My poor child, don't fret about her; she strikes me as a woman very well able to take care of herself."

Lit's eyes were full of tears.

"Mother was always afraid for Isola; she was so pretty, you see, and so much admired."

"Was she like you?"

"Like me! You must be laughing at me, Doctor. Isola is as fair as a lily, and I am only a plain little brown thing."

"Everyone does not think so, it seems."

Lit blushed crimson.

"Do you know, Lena, when you go home you will take my boy's heart with you."

"Mr. Charteris will soon forget me."

"He says differently; and I don't think, as a family, we are good at forgetting. He tells me you won't listen to him, and I am sorry for it; any girl might trust her happiness to Nell."

"But I couldn't let him trust his to me. Oh! Dr. Charteris, think of Isola, and all the harm she has done your niece. How could you let your son marry her sister?"

"I am not afraid. I don't think you and Mrs. Merton can have much resemblance. Think it over, child, and if Nell persuades you to change your mind, remember we will gladly welcome you as a daughter."

And Nell took Lit for drives in the sweet spring sunshine; he gathered primroses for her in the hedges, and somehow, during these walks and drives, he managed to persuade her he could never be happy without her; and so it came about that the last night of Lit's stay in Gloucestershire found her with a Mixpah ring on her engaged finger, shadowing forth to all the world that she was Nell's promised wife.

Mr. Charteris was to take her home, and make the acquaintance of her parents and the tribe.

"They will say you have done very badly for yourself, Miss Lit," said the doctor, gaily; "your father will find a plain country surgeon a very different son-in-law from Major Merton."

Lit smiled.

"Money doesn't make people happy."

"I don't think you will ever be over-burdened with it," said the Doctor. "This house and the position I fill now will be Nell's some day, only you see Charteris Hall has always been a kind of second home to all of us. I expect things will be different when there is a new master there. None of us have seen my brother Tom for twenty years, and his boys are absolute strangers to the old place; but they must reign there, and Nell

and Margaret be only occasional visitors. You know all this, don't you, Lit? You have no ambition to be lady of the Hall!"

"Nor lady of the Rosery either," said Lit, quietly. "There is a dear little cottage in the village which Nell means to save up and buy, and we shall make it quite a paradise."

"A paradise of four rooms!" said Nell comically. "Lit, darling, your ideas of paradise are limited."

"Don't change them," said Mrs. Charteris kindly. "I like Lit just as she is."

But for all that the Doctor and his wife did feel a little sad sometimes, to think of the day, which could not be far distant now, when the Hall must pass to those who were well-nigh strangers there.

For a dozen years Meg had ruled as her grandfather's housekeeper. All his life Nell had lived almost as a son of the soil, and he would feel it hard to have no longer part or parcel in the fair estate.

"I wish Tom would send his eldest boy home," said the Doctor, musingly, to his wife when they were alone that night. "It's all nonsense his wanting a profession. He'll be Charteris of Charteris, and he ought to know something of his own estate."

"Why don't you write and say so?"

"Tom might resent the interference."

"You can but try."

The Doctor began to think seriously about it. But on the third day after Nell and his *fançuse* had left for France, an event occurred which made his letter useless. The old master of Charteris Hall died in his sleep as peacefully as a little child, and the Colonel away in Ceylon was the new Lord Charteris.

"You will call at once," said Dr. Charteris to the lawyer. "Tom may have some instruction to send, you know."

"Certainly; but it will be as well to wait till she mail comes in. It's due this morning."

It was brought in even as he spoke, a single letter in a deep black border addressed to Dr. Charteris in a weak, quivering hand.

"From Lady Maude; strange that she should write! She is the worst correspondent of them all."

The letter was short and incoherent. But there could be no doubt of its purport. Colonel Charteris and his two sons had been drowned within sight of their own house through the capsizing of a pleasure-boat. Lady Maude, a childless widow, would be in England by the next steamer after her sorrowful note.

"My good gracious me, Doctor," was the lawyer's first comment, "you're Lord Charteris!"

The Doctor started, and then it all came home to him, the astounding change made by the news from Ceylon. He was the head of his house, Charteris of Charteris.

"No, not Charteris," said Mr. Ashwin, gravely. He was the family lawyer, and had no connection with the firm who had been poor Nell's trustees. "Unluckily the estate and its revenues can descend in the female line; your brother Charles's daughter is now the mistress of Charteris Hall!"

"You can't mean it!"

"Alas! I do."

"Don't think me covetous, or that I grudge my niece her inheritance; and had the news come three months ago, when she was still Helen Charteris, I could have borne it. But to think that such a scoundrel as Rex Denzil should be master in the home of my forefathers, why Ashwin, it's torture to me."

"I wish with all my heart it were otherwise."

"There must be some mistake, Ashwin. You can't mean that I must see that man ruling at Charteris Hall!"

"I fear so."

"He'll ruin the property!"

"He can't. He—or rather his wife—is but a life tenant; he can't fell a tree, or raise a penny on the place, but it is his wife's for the term of her natural life. It may return to you then if she has no children."

"I suppose I must write to him."

"Better let me send a letter to his lawyers."

"And, Ashwin, make a point of seeing his wife. She has given him a power of attorney to act for her, and she has been strictly inviolable ever since."

"I'll manage that."

But he had hard work to do. Messrs. Cleghorn and Hallis, Helen's trustees, played into his hands, or he never would have succeeded. These legal gentlemen informed Mr. Denzil it was absolutely impossible Charteris Hall and its revenues would be given up to him on behalf of his wife unless that lady came forward and established her right to them.

Denzil was so desperately angry the lawyers trembled for the poor young creature so utterly at his mercy; and he flung out of their office, declaring that his wife was far too ill to be troubled about business matters.

Perhaps Nell was better than he thought her; perhaps her heart yearned towards her kindred; for two days later Doctor Charteris received a short note from her, evidently her own composition.

"DEAR UNCLE CHARTERIS,—

"I hear you are angry with my husband because he did not wish me to come to London. I am not well enough to face the March winds, but perhaps you could come to us here. If you agree to this, and will bring Mr. Ashwin and my cousin Nell as witnesses, I shall be ready to sign any papers or answer any questions you please. I am sorry to give you so much trouble, but Rex will not hear of my going north at present."

"I am, yours faithfully,

"HELEN DENZIL."

"Well!"

They were holding a council of war—the new Lord Charteris, Nell, and Mr. Ashwin. The new Baron said he meant to keep his title, but he knew how incongruous it was for a country doctor; and, as his father had left him a handsome legacy, he thought he would retire and leave the practice to Nell. Mr. Ashwin urged him to do so; then Nell's letter was read aloud, and carefully examined by the three men in turn.

"I think it is genuine," said the lawyer, slowly. "If it had been written by Mr. Denzil or at his dictation he would have inserted some sentence praising himself for his care of her. I think we may conclude these are your niece's own settlements; and I strongly advise you to agree to her proposal."

"Will you go, Nell?"

Nell shook his head.

"I can't be spared, father."

"Nonsense, you must come."

"Very well. I can only be away one night, remember; and, father, don't leave me alone with Denzil. I don't think I could keep my hands off him."

"We won't say we are coming; it's better to take them by surprise. We'll go down by the night express, breakfast at the hotel, and present ourselves to our unknown relations to-morrow."

"Have we ever seen a photograph of her?" asked Nell, suddenly.

"Not unless Lit showed you one."

"Lit had never seen her."

"There's no difficulty of identity; Messrs. Cleghorn & Harris are quite satisfied that Mr. Denzil's wife is their late ward. I'd rather take them by surprise; we might catch her alone, poor child, and find out whether her husband treats her decently."

It was a brilliant March morning when, after a hearty breakfast, the three men strolled slowly down the Devonshire lanes towards "Primrose Bank," the temporary residence of the Denzils.

Mr. Ashwin, who had all a lawyer's talent for cross-examining, made several inquiries at the principal shops, and learned that Mrs. Denzil had only been a week at Primrose Bank. She was attended by her maid and footman; her husband was daily expected to join her.

Delicate (in reply to Lord Charteris)! Well, some said she had too bright a colour to be healthy, but she never coughed or ailed anything. And the servants at Primrose Bank, who were

let with the house, said she was a very nice, pleasant-spoken young lady, and as merry as a cricket.

"We have been wasting our pity," said Nell, and his listeners agreed with him when, ten minutes later, they were ushered into the presence of a slight, black-robed figure whose bright eyes and smiling face both testified to her felicity.

"I am so very glad to see you," said Mrs. Denzil, shaking hands with each in turn. "I only wish Rex was at home; he would understand things so much better than I do."

"I must congratulate you on your marriage, Helen," said Lord Charteris, stiffly. "I trust it has conducted to your happiness!"

"It has, indeed," said the young wife, lightly.

She spoke without the least affectation or effort. Her cheeks were round, and bore the hue of health; in short, a more perfect picture of smiling prosperity it would have been hard to find. Truly, as Nell said, they had been wasting their pity.

But, as after a pleasant half-hour they were retracing their steps to the hotel, the strangest of all thoughts flashed across the young surgeon. His mind had gone back (not unnaturally) to Lit and the many long talks they had had concerning his unknown cousin.

Nell knew what his father did not, that Nell had been wooed by her husband under a borrowed name.

It was this recollection that induced a strange suspicion to flit across the young man's brain. What if this brilliant vision of happy wifehood were but a counterfeit, got up to deceive them? Not one of them had ever seen Helen Charteris—how could they be sure they had seen her now?

No sooner thought than said. Before he knew what he was about, Nell had told his companions the suspicion.

"Your scepticism is remarkable," said Mr. Ashwin, a little coldly, for he considered it tantamount to being accused of too prompt credulity.

"I assure you I am perfectly satisfied. What do you suppose Mr. Denzil would do with his real wife, while he dressed up another to represent her? Besides, our visit was impromptu; they could have had no idea we were coming!"

"Nell," said his father, testily, "you must be going out of your senses!"

Would he have thought so could he have seen a letter then in course of writing, describing him as a "dear old noodle, who just believed everything I liked to tell him; so all is quite safe, Rex, and you are master of Charteris Hall!"

Mr. Denzil burnt that letter the instant he received it, and muttered between his teeth that women could never learn caution. There was a mystery in his life, but the Charteris family were not on the track of it yet!

(To be continued.)

It has been found that an apparatus for killing animals with chloroform in England would not work in India, because the high temperature prevented the concentration of the chloroform vapour. That this was the cause was proved by the fact that by placing ice in the box the animals were readily killed.

In the palm region of the Amazon River there is a tribe which cradles their infants in palm leaves. A single leaf, turned up around the edges by some native process, makes an excellent cradle, and now and then it is made to do service as a bath-tub. Strong cords are formed from the fibres of another species of palm, and by these this natural cradle is swung alongside a tree, and the wind rocks the little one to sleep. A long time ago the Amazonian mothers discovered that it was not wise to leave baby and cradle under a cocoa palm, for the mischievous monkey delighted to drop nuts downward with unerring precision. An older child is stationed near by to watch the baby during his slumbers, and the chatter of monkeys overhead is enough to cause a speedy migration.

BY LOVE'S CONTROL.

—30:—

(Continued from page 152.)

He inveighed furiously against the low adventurer who presumed to lift his eyes to a daughter of Danecourt, condemned himself for the gracious condescension with which he had treated Frank, and then emptied the vials of his wrath upon Dagmar's head.

She listened dumbly to his furious outbreak, making allowance for his disappointment, his pride of race; and when he paused for want of breath, said gently,—

"Dear, be kind to me, for my lot is a heavy one; and—and you are safe. Mr. Cross knows all, but will not release me. And if you love me, as I hope and believe you do, you will make your reply to Mr. Lennox courteous."

He made an angry rejoinder, but her words had weight with him, and the reply for which Frank waited and Mr. Lennox postponed his journey, though cold in the extreme, was not otherwise offensive.

"This settles the question, Frank," said his father. "I must be your ambassador, and the sooner I'm off the better."

That same night John Troffis was astonished to see a tall, handsome-looking man walk into his bar.

"It never rains but it pours," he thought, "and Mr. Lennox has brought me rare luck."

His astonishment was still further augmented when the stranger said,—

"My son has recommended me to spend a week or two at your comfortable inn. I would be glad if you could let me have his rooms."

"Mr. Lennox, senior, I presume, sir?" said John, with his best bow.

Mr. Lennox nodded, and the landlord led the way to the sitting-room Frank had recently occupied, talking garrulously.

"I hope we haven't seen the last of your son, sir! He's as fine and pleasant a young gentleman as ever we've had quartered here. My misels took an awful fancy to him—and so did Sir Humphrey, as no doubt he told you."

"Yes, yes, ah! He's a likely-looking lad, and a good lad too! But see here, Mr. Troffis, I'm as hungry as the proverbial hunter. What can you give me for supper?"

"There's some pickled salmon and a good cut of ham in the larder, sir; and I've some excellent bottled ale."

"Let me have the salmon and ale, then, quickly please."

John himself spread the snowy cloth, and waited anxiously on the visitor, now and again shooting curious glances at him; and presently he said,—

"Begging your pardon, sir, your face seems familiar-like to me; and it can't be because Mr. Frank's like you, for you're as different looking as you can be."

"Yes," said Mr. Lennox, composedly, "he is like his mother."

"I think I've never met you before!" insisted John.

"I believe not. It is rather more than thirty years since I was here."

"That's a long time, sir; a good share out of a man's life. Ah! I've got it now. It's Sir Humphrey you're like—only you haven't his peevish look. Dear me, there's a wonderful likeness between you."

"I suppose I ought to feel flattered!" laughed Mr. Lennox. "I almost wonder my son did not mention the fact of my likeness to such a grandee," when he dismissed the man, and sat thinking while the stars came out in the pale grey sky and the light faded from the lovely earth, lingeringly slowly, as if loth to depart.

His face was grave even to melancholy now, and once or twice he sighed heavily. Then he got up, and throwing wide the window, looked out and over to The Towers, and his eyes had grown regretful.

"The same, just the same!" he muttered. "There is no alteration there—the change is in me." He turned away with a sigh. "Well,

well, it was all for the best, all for the best, and I must be content."

In the morning his cheerfulness had returned, and having breakfasted heartily, he went out, and towards the distant woods.

His mind was very busy with the question of Frank's happiness, and yet old memories, old hopes, old desires would come crowding in upon him; and once he spoke aloud,—

"Poor girl! poor girl! I wonder, would she have been happier with me away yonder! poor, pretty Theresa!"

Then he stood still, and his heart beat a trifle faster, his eyes were less clear than usual, as a girl emerged from amongst the trees—a girl with a proud, pale face, from which all the light was gone, with eyes so like those eyes which ages ago had seemed to look love into his, and a crown of auburn hair, the like of which he had not seen these thirty years.

Lovelier than the lovely young mother she could not remember, Dagmar advanced, glancing indifferently at the waiting figure; and when she was near enough for speech Thomas Lennox advanced, hat in hand, and with a courtly bow, said,—

"Have I the honour to address Miss Danecourt?"

Wondering a little, Dagmar answered in the affirmative, and he went on to say,—

"I am my son's ambassador. I have come to plead Frank's cause with you."

She started, and her pale face grew yet paler, as she said, hurriedly,—

"I cannot listen to you, I thought Mr. Lennox would understand my silence, and be merciful to me; my weakness should have won so much pity for me."

"My dear," he answered, with grave tenderness, "it was my wish not his that I should come on this errand. I cannot think calmly of the wreck you are bent on making of his happiness and yours. Let us talk over the matter quietly, and see what can be done for you both."

"Oh! believe nothing can be done. Do not distress yourself and me by any useless arguments or entreaties."

Mr. Lennox took her hand, and leading her to the fallen trunk of an elm, sat down beside her.

"My dear," he said, gently, "you have got to listen to me, and remember that in all I say I have your welfare at heart. You love my Frank?"

The flush on her face answered him.

"Very well, that being granted, why will you send him away! Why are you so bent upon choosing misery when happiness is offered you! Dagmar, it is a terrible thing you contemplate, and can have but one result. This man you would marry, do you for an instant suppose he will patiently bear your coldness and disdain?"

"Do not urge these things upon me," she cried, distressfully, "I know I am binding myself to absolute pain. That nothing will be good for me any more; but it is my duty. I have promised."

"To break such a promise is less culpable than to keep it. Will you go to Heaven's altar with a lie on your lips, a lie in your heart. You are young to perjure yourself so terribly. Dear girl, nothing but love can make marriage happy—love so complete, so divine in its strength and tenderness that no time can change or chill it—no ill can touch it, unless it be to strengthen it; not even wrong can break it down; love that gives all generously, freely, not counting the cost, only craving a like love in return."

She lifted sweet, wet eyes to his.

"You speak kindly to me," she said, in a low voice, "and I know that all you say is true; but I know it too late."

"It is not too late," decisively, "it cannot be that, so long as you are still Dagmar Danecourt. The time is yours now. What will you do with your life! Will you make or mar it?"

"What can I do?" in greatest grief and agitation. "Oh, my poor father!"

"He shall not suffer, I promise you so much."

"But The Towers! It would kill him to be driven out of his home."

"Neither shall The Towers be lost;" in a tone she could not doubt. "I do not say Frank is rich (a smile hovered about his lips then), but he and I have enough, I fancy, to free the old place, if you don't mind roughing it over yonder for a few years."

She was visibly wavering, and he pressed his advantage mercilessly until she said, hurriedly, and in a half-frightened way,—

"We are forgetting Mr. Cross, and you seem not to think how I shall tarnish the Danecourt honour by breaking so solemn a promise."

"Bother the 'Danecourt honour.' The world will get along very well without it. Of course, in good time, you would confess all to your elderly lover, and he must make the best of the case. What right had such an old fogey to dream of linking your young life to his?"

"Mr. Lennox," desperately, "are you quite sure that you will save my home?"

"On my honour, yes!"

"Then, oh! I am afraid I am doing wrong, but I cannot help myself, I—I so love Frank. Tell him that he may come to me, that—"

"That so far you have proved yourself a good girl; but you must go farther. You are not to suppose that Sir Humphrey will consent to your union; consequently, it must take place without his knowledge or sanction."

"Oh no, no! I could not so deceive him!"

"Very well; then you must reverse your message. No woman shall play fast and loose with my son, if I can help it. So soon as I was gone, your father and that fellow Cross would persuade, threaten, coerce; and you are but a woman—"

"I have given you my promise," proudly, "I will keep it!"

"It is a maxim of mine always 'to make assurance double sure,' and that with all haste. I have got to think of my son as well as for you, and from the following conditions I will not go. On the day after your birthday you are to walk to St. Mark's Church, Danesford, and there Frank and I will meet you. You are to take no one into your confidence; and when you are safely man and wife I will bring you back to your father, and he will not only forgive, but bless you."

In spite of her fears and doubts—in spite of her distress and opposition—Mr. Lennox clung to his conditions, and in the end he was victorious.

CHAPTER VIII.

MANY, many times before her wedding day drew near, was Dagmar tempted to confess all to her father, and crave his pardon and consent to her marriage; but she knew well this would never be granted, and so refrained.

Frank returned to Danesford, thinking it wiser not to take up his quarters at John Troffis'; but every night he contrived to meet Dagmar, and murmur such words of reassuring love that her drooping spirits revived.

He much objected to the clandestine way in which the marriage would take place, but on this point Mr. Lennox was obdurate; he was bent upon testing the girl to the utmost.

The eventual morning dawned bright and beautiful, and Dagmar, dressing with trembling fingers, was a very pale bride indeed. She wore one of her plain white gowns, and an inexpensive bonnet with white ribbons, which in its simplicity was not suggestive of a wedding.

Unobserved she left the house, and walking rapidly through the grounds joined Mr. Lennox, who was looking wonderfully handsome and elate.

He drew her hand in his arm and spoke cheerfully to her, but she was beyond the power of speech, and so he left her in silence; in a little while they entered Danesford; the streets were yet quiet, the shops being for the most part unopened, and almost unobserved they entered St. Mark's.

The clergyman, who had known Dagmar from

childhood, spoke a few words in a low tone to Mr. Lennox, who replied sharply,—

"Let her alone, it is all right; she is of age," and then the ceremony began, and Dagmar made the response like one in a dream, hardly realising the enormity of the step she was taking.

When they adjourned to the vestry she signed her name in trembling characters; then the book was given first to the son, next the father; and as the clergyman's eyes rested on their signatures, he said,—

"I beg your pardon, you have made a mistake."

"Not at all," said Mr. Lennox, affily, and he followed Frank and his bride, leaving the good man staring in wonder at those three names,

Dagmar Danecourt,
Frank Lennox Danecourt,
Sebert Thomas Danecourt.

"We will go to The Towers, dear wife," said Frank, "and make our peace with Sir Humphrey; what a surprise we shall give him."

"Not a pleasant one, I'm afraid," she answered, clinging about him. "Oh! Frank, you should love me very dearly, seeing what I have given up for you."

He pressed her little hand the closer, whilst Mr. Lennox indulged in a broad smile; his spirits seemed quite wonderful that morning, and his merriment must have been infectious, for presently Frank paused in the middle of the road and laughed long and boisterously. Dagmar was both hurt and frightened, and looked reproachfully at him; surely he had not been drinking!

That look recalled him to his senses, and with a hasty incoherent, but wholly tender apology, he went on once more, and had no fresh attack of unseemly mirth until the trio were approaching the hall door.

"Let me go in first!" Dagmar pleaded. "Papa deserves as much consideration, we have so deceived him—and—Frank, dearest, if he should say hard things, we must not resent them, in time he will forgive. Now, dear, let me go!"

"But it seems cowardly to let you be the bearer of the news."

"Nonsense," said Mr. Lennox, "Dagmar is right, and we will wait outside the door; go, my dear, and luck be with you."

Trembling she entered. Her father looked up and was surprised to see her dressed for walking; then, as he caught the expression of her white face, a great fear fell on him, which was not lessened when she ran to him and throwing her arms about his neck, begged him to forgive her; imploring him, with streaming eyes not to love her less, because not even her dear husband's love could make her life complete if he were lost.

With a great horror Sir Humphrey realised the truth, saw his home with all its fair lands given over to strangers, himself penniless, friendless, shelterless, and thrusting Dagmar away, he broke into a terrible denunciation of her and her husband.

But he had said very little when the door was flung violently open, and a strong, manly voice cried,—

"Humphrey!"

He wheeled round, and confronting Mr. Lennox gasped,—

"Sebert! I—I—we all believed you dead!"

"Brother, have you no better welcome for me than this!" asked the other, advancing to him. "Dagmar, my dear daughter, come here," and bewildered beyond measure, she went to him, whilst Frank supported her on the other side.

"Brother Humphrey, you should be glad that I have saved your child from certain misery. You would have sold her to save this place, as though her soul, and her young, sweet life, were not of more value than it; but by her marriage with my son she has won happiness and her home too."

"But—I do not understand," said Dagmar, confusedly, whilst Sir Humphrey was silent from stupefaction.

"Probably not, my love! and, to make it clear, I will tell you my story. But first let me absolve Frank of all share of this innocent deception. Until last night he believed himself Frank Lennox, a simple Colonial, with no claim to birth or breeding."

"Humphrey, when you robbed me of my fiancée, I could remain in England no longer, and as you well know, started for Australia, from which country I wrote you twice or thrice. But I knew how you longed for my empty title, how much she wished it yours; and when a report of my death was circulated, I did not contradict it; rather, I endeavoured to confirm it still further."

"You were only too glad to believe in it; and so you entered upon possession; but I never lost sight of you. I followed the wretched fortunes of our house step by step. I knew the date of your first son's birth. I wondered much what was before him."

"Then chance threw me in the society of a young and beautiful Scotch girl. She was poor and friendless, so was I; and, being weary of my lonely life, I married her. But she died young, leaving me only this legacy," and here he touched his son lightly.

"I was troubled, then, as to my duty towards him. He was heir to an ancient name and a fine estate."

"Was it well to rear him in ignorance of these things? I could not decide satisfactorily; and, meanwhile, I moved further up the country; and at that time adopted my wife's family name."

"Then things began to prosper with me. My boy grew and thrived, was so happy in our way of life, that I did not like the idea of transplanting him."

"I began to grow rich. Everything I touched turned to money; and I often thought of writing you of my prosperity; but she was dead, the title was yours, and I was happy enough—at least, as happy as a man dare hope to be."

"So things went on until my boy was a fine grown young fellow. And when he expressed a wish to visit the old country, I was willing he should come."

"I earnestly impressed upon him my desire that he should visit The Towers; and I think I half hoped he would meet his cousin, and a mutual attachment would spring up."

"And when he had gone, the place was so horribly lonely, I followed him on here."

"Then came the story of his love. I might have spared him pain. I might have simplified matters at once, but I wanted to test your daughter. I wanted to know which was the greater with her—her love for my lad, or the confounded Danecourt pride."

"And the love conquered!" Frank said, joyously. "Uncle, will you shake hands with me! You know I was always a favourite with you."

Humphrey Danecourt offered his hand in a dazed way.

"It is all—very wonderful! but I—I don't see how I am benefited by—by this change of husbands."

"Don't you!" remarked his brother. "Let me tell you, then. The Towers will be freed from encumbrances, and much of the old state revived. The title, my dear boy, I am sorry to say, must fall on me; but you're welcome to it. I shall return to Australia to settle my affairs; and then, as separation from Frank is not to be thought of, I shall come back, like the proverbial penny, and settle here with you and the young people. How will that suit? Dagmar, my dear, I hope you are satisfied!"

She made him no answer; but, turning to her happy young husband, hid her blushing, radiant face upon his breast.

"Frank! Frank!" she whispered, "can you ever forget my pride? I thought I was sacrificing so much, when it was you who gave all! Husband! dear husband! how much I will try to repay you for all your generous goodness!"

"Don't talk like that, sweetheart! Have you not given me yourself, the richest and greatest boon on earth! And now you have nothing to do but to love me always as you do now! What

a changed and humbled darling your have grown!" holding her from him, she better to see her face.

She laughed.

"The change has been made by Love's Control! Dear papa, you forgive me now!"

The wedding tour occupied a considerable time, the young people travelling with Sir Sebert to Australia; Humphrey Danecourt formed one of the little party, too.

He was glad to get away from England for awhile, not caring to face Outhbert Cross in his rage and disappointment.

The banker was like one gone mad when he found his prey had escaped him; and Miss Sarah did not find living with him pleasant in those days.

But before the return of the Danecourts he contracted diphtheria, which ended fatally in less than forty-eight hours; so that, when Dagmar re-entered her home, there was not one drop of bitterness in her overflowing cup.

Years came and went, bringing happiness along with them; and, relieved from his pressing pecuniary troubles, Humphrey seemed to grow young again. And when Dagmar's children could run about the grey terraces and pleasant walks, he and Sir Sebert vied to "spoil the youngsters."

As for Dagmar, as she looks into her husband's handsome, happy face, she can but thank Heaven that she bowed herself to Love's Control.

[THE END.]

BUT NOT OUR HEARTS.

—10:—

CHAPTER XXXIV.—(continued.)

"You will excuse my coming!" he said, questioningly.

"If you wish to come here, if it be not painful, you know you are welcome!" she returned, gently.

"Thanks. I have a motive, as I suppose you know."

"I guessed as much."

"I am going away," he said slowly, watching her. "I think it best."

"Yes."

"I have come to say good-bye."

Her pale face grew paler, her lips quivered.

"Is it not best?" he asked, as she remained silent.

"Yes," she answered, lifting her sad eyes to his. "It will be best."

"I thought so. And you will forgive me for coming here?"

"There is nothing to forgive," she said, simply.

"It may pain you to see me. Partings are always sad; but I was selfish enough to wish to carry with me the memory of you in your own home—the home I once hoped would have been yours and mine."

"Poor Paul," she whispered.

"The memory of you, as I see you now, will linger with me for many a long year, brighten many a night watch in distant lands, cheer me on my way."

"You—you—are going abroad, then?" she faltered.

"Yes."

"With what ship?"

"I have left the Navy."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. I am not very much good now. That blow on the head renders me heavy at times."

"I am sorry to think you have given up your profession."

"So was I at first, but I have got used to it now," and he rose as he spoke, and stood with his back to the window. As he did so the door opened, and a woman, holding in her hands a magnificent fan of white feathers, entered. He started violently as his eyes fell on her.

"Madame's fan," she said, softly; and putting it down without glancing at him, gilded out.

"What is that woman doing here, Opal?" he broke out, amazedly.

"She is my French maid," she replied, looking up in astonishment.

"She has no right here."

"Why not?"

"That woman is Valerie de Lague, my father's cast-off mistress."

"Paul?"

"It is true."

"Are you sure?"

"Perfectly certain. Her face—good-looking, in a bold, repellent style—is not one easily forgotten. How long has she been with you?"

"Four or five months."

"You should send her away at once. She is a dangerous woman, and some of her associates in former days were of the worst possible type."

"Perhaps it is she who has stolen the things lately missed."

"Very like. I beg you to tell Mr. Spragg at once."

"I will do so. He has gone to consult a detective about the robberies."

"I hope you will get rid of her before anything serious happens."

"I hope so."

"And now—good-bye. Heaven bless and keep you always."

"Good-bye, dear Paul!" she murmured, inarticulately, as he pressed a kiss on the little ungloved hand he held; and then, with one last lingering look, turned and left her.

CHAPTER XXXV.

MR. SPRAGG came in soon after. He seemed restless and disturbed. He fidgeted about, and at last got over to his wife and standing before her said—

"Chichery has been here, has he not?"

"Yes," she answered, calmly.

"What did he come for?"

"To say good-bye. He is leaving England in a few days, and will never return to it."

"Ah!"

The monosyllable was full of significance, and then a pause ensued.

"Opal," he said at last, tremblingly, breaking the awkward silence, did—did you—once—love that man?"

"Yes," she acknowledged, disdaining to deny it.

"Once I loved him as my life."

"And now?" eagerly.

"Now I remember that I am—your wife," she returned, proudly.

"Ah! I see," he said, hurriedly, going towards the door.

"Stay," she cried, thinking of Valerie, "there is something I want to tell you."

"Not now," he replied. "I—must—dress—little time," and he went out and up to his room—Turk, who had greeted him rapturously on his entrance, following closely.

Mr. Spragg occupied the principal bed-chamber, that had once been occupied by Charles I. It was a whim of his. He liked antiquities, and there were plenty there.

A few alterations had been made since the time of the Chicherys, new tapestry hangings put up, a modern-antique wardrobe, or one or two other things necessary for comfort. But the huge funeral bed, with its nodding plumes, remained, the carved chairs, and the old swing mirror.

The American was not long making his toilet. In an incredibly short space of time he threw off his tweed suit, and donned evening dress. He was so much occupied with thoughts of Chichery's visit, and Opal's acknowledgment of having loved him, that he did not notice the absence of his valet, which at other times would have filled him with astonishment. He fastened the last stud in his shirt, gave the last touch to his hair, and prepared to descend, when a slight

disarrangement of the hangings that concealed the secret door attracted his attention. He went over, and lifting them, found it was open. He glanced up the winding flight of stairs. Should he go up and see what was the meaning of the door being open? He hesitated—a curious feeling of reluctance on him. He had a sort of horror of the turret-chamber, and never went into it, a thing that was well known to all the household.

Should he go, or send one of the servants? Time was pressing. His invited guests would arrive soon. The thought urged him on to action. He ran lightly up the winding steps. The massive door stood open, and as he stepped across the threshold he saw a man bending over the cabinet, and rummaging its contents by the aid of a dark lantern.

"Who the deuce are you, and what are you doing?" he shouted, angrily.

"*Saint-Bien*. Is it you, M'sieu?" exclaimed a voice he recognised as Claremont's, and the next moment the valet made for the door, but Spragg barred his way.

"Let me pass," he said, coolly.

"Not till you explain your presence here at this hour."

"You wael not let me go?"

"No. I guess you are the thief we are in search of."

"Ah! Set! Take that, and that, done!" screeched the Frenchman, suddenly plunging a knife he held into Spragg's breast.

With a low moan the unfortunate man threw up his arms and fell at the foot of the sentry-box clock, the blood rushing out from his wound, and making a pool near the door, in which his assassin stepped as he fled out, down the steps, the red print on each one.

Meanwhile the guests had arrived. Mr. and Mrs. Vane, Lady Dorothy, the Earl and Countess of Mount Severn, Mr. and Mrs. Bevoir, Tina, Sir Humphrey and Lady Scargill, a sporting parson, one or two officers, and a few others. It was past eight, and yet the master of the house had not appeared.

Opal moved about amongst them, chattering with well-stimulated gaiety, trying to forget her sorrow, and the heavy heart she carried in her bosom, and the fact that she would never again in this world look on the face of the man she loved.

"Where is Washington?" asked Blackie, in a whisper.

"I don't know," she returned, in the same tone. "He went to dress half-an-hour ago."

"It is very odd! I must go and see where he is."

"Yes, do." But as she spoke an appalling scream rang through the house, the scream of a woman, followed by a peculiar growling noise.

"Good heavens! What is that?" exclaimed Mrs. Vane, turning pale, even under her rouge.

"We will go and see," said Sir Humphrey, and he and Blackie, and one or two others hastily left the room and wended their way upstairs, accompanied by some of the men-servants who had been attracted by the scream.

In Spragg's bedroom an extraordinary sight met their gaze. Valerie Cotts, moaning and crying, knelt a few feet from Turk, who held a man pinned by the throat, growling ferociously.

"Save him! save him, messieurs!" screamed the woman. "That *déte amoureux* will kill him."

"What—what's this?" stammered Sir Humphrey.

"Who is the man?"

"It is Claremont, Washington's valet," declared Blackie, who, knowing the dog, had approached him, and was trying to induce him to let go, while the woman kept on screaming and wringing her hands.

After a time, the mastiff, giving the prostrate wretch a final shake, let go, and sat licking his bloody paws with evident relish, and eyeing his prey.

"The man is very much injured," said Blackie, examining his lacerated face and torn throat and hands. "And there is more here than meets the eye. Here is a blood-stained knife under him, and his sleeves are soaking. I fear something terrible has happened to Washington. See, there are marks up the steps," and bounding forward

he was in the turret chamber almost before he ceased speaking.

The feeble light of the dark lantern showed Spragg's white, upturned face, as he lay by the clock, and Blackie sank on his knees beside him, and called upon him to speak in anguished tones—for the young fellow had always been warmly attached to him, seeing the good heart that was hidden under the unprepossessing exterior. But he received no answer from the unconscious man, and, calling up the others, between them they carried him down, and laid him on the great bed, with its nodding plumes and heavy draperies.

"Take that wretch away," he said, spurning Claremont, "and send for a doctor, and the police."

The servants flew to obey his orders. The valet's insensible form was dragged off to the servants' quarters, closely followed by the distracted Valerie, who was well watched lest she should escape.

Two messengers rode off at a furious rate, one to Evesham for the police, and another to Dene for the doctor.

The ghastly news was gently broken to Opal, and without waiting to change her dress she hurried up to the room where her husband lay, in his evening clothes, with the elaborate shirt-front drenched in gore, and his pale face set and still.

"Is—is it likely to prove fatal?" she faltered, when Linton had made his examination and managed to get the wounded man undressed and to bed.

"I fear so," he answered, gravely. "The loss of blood has been tremendous."

"Can nothing be done?"

"Nothing. One lung is pierced."

"And—he will—sink?"

"I am afraid he will. He must have a tablespoonful of claret every ten minutes, and don't let him talk."

He remained insensible during the greater part of the night, but recovered consciousness towards morning, when Blackie immediately administered some claret. He recovered a little after that, and looking round, murmured—

"Opal!"

"I am here, dear!" she said, choking back her sobs, and taking his hand.

"I am going," he whispered, hoarsely. "You will be free."

"No, no, you must live!" she exclaimed, in a passion of remorse and regret.

"It—is—better—that—I should go," he panted, brokenly. "You—have—been—a good—wife—tried to do—your duty though—you didn't love me. Our hands have met, but not our hearts." He went on, with a touch of sentiment she had not believed him capable of, "and they—never would—have met."

"They shall," she said, firmly. "Only live, and I will do my utmost to make you happy."

"Too late—too late!" he gasped.

Then, in a last dying effort, just once the wistful, cloudy eyes met hers, and he whispered—

"Kiss—me—wife—on the—lips—a—good—bye," and bending her fair, stately head, for the first time she pressed her mouth to her husband's in a long, clinging kiss; and so he died, with her lips on his, and his neck encircled by her soft arm, and her hand clasping his—died, as he had never lived, content in her fond embrace.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE news of Mr. Spragg's awfully sudden death, from the blow of the assassin's knife, spread like wildfire through the county. Paul Chichery heard it early the next morning.

"There's a foin to do at Temple Dene, surr," announced Dick Riveller, entering the room where Paul was breakfasting with little ceremony.

"A to do! About what?"

"A murder."

"A murder! Who—what—do you—mean?" he faltered, turning deadly white.

"The master's killed, surr."

"Mr. Spragg!"

"Yes."

"How! By whom! What do you know!" he demanded, excitedly.

"Not over much at present, surr. He was stabbed."

"Have they got the murderer?"

"Yes, surr, they nabbed him, leastways the dog did."

"Turk!"

"Ay. Caught him by the throat, and manled him fofnaly."

"Is it known who he is?"

"Ay. The French wally, what your father picked up in Pares."

"Ah! The rounndel!" cried the young man, jumping up. "I begin to understand it now. He has been robbing his employer, and used the knife when found out and his villainy unmasked."

"That's so, that's so, surr."

"I must go up to the house, and inquire into this matter. I always mistrusted that man. Perhaps some light may be thrown on my father's mysterious death."

"Ay. The master were helped out o' the world, I'd bet my last shillin'." I were one agin the crown's 'quest, and applesy or no applesy, he'd had a thumb on his wind-pipe which stopped his breathin', and purpled his face."

"You think so?" interrogated Paul, eagerly.

"Yes, surr, an' I said so at the time. Bat it weren't no manner o' use. I were one agin eleven, and tothers swore as the quacks did, that it were applesy. So at last, findin' I couldn't do no good, I held my peace, and let 'em ha' it their way, an' I never said nothin' to you cos I thought you was satisfied with the verdict, an' I didn't want to put ideas of foul play into yer head, and distress you for nothink."

"No. Perhaps you were right. We may come at the truth now."

"I hope so."

"And I shall not leave to-day, Dick, so take my things back to the yellow room."

"I'm delighted to hear it, surr," returned honest Dick, pleasure beaming on his broad rubund face. "May you stay a werry long toime at the Blue Dragon."

"Thanks," said young Chichester, as he went out, on his way to his old home.

He hurried along, anxious to arrive at the scene of the murder, his mind full of doubts, fears, and misgivings.

It was a dull, damp morning, dispiriting in the extreme; a veil of mist hung over the landscape. The thinly-leaved tree-branches dripped with moisture, and the drive leading up to the house was full of pools from the recent night's rain.

A forlorn aspect Temple Dene presented, with closed shutters and down-drawn blinds, a curious stillness reigning in and around it.

"A bad business, Mister Paul," whispered Benson, solemnly, as he let him in.

"Terrible. Where is the wretch who did the mischief?"

"He is still lying where they placed him last night. He's very bad."

"They have not taken him away?"

"No, sir. Doctor Linton thought it best not to do so."

"Are the police here?"

"Yes. They're watching him."

"Ah, Paul! I am glad you have come," exclaimed Blackie, emerging from the dining-room. "Isn't this awful! Poor Washington!"

"Awful indeed. What motive could the assassin have had?"

"That remains to be seen. We don't know at present. He always seemed on good terms with his master, who was particularly kind and partial to him."

"So I have heard. That black-browed wench, Valerie de Largue, is at the bottom of it all."

"Valerie Cotic, you mean," corrected the younger man.

"No, Valerie de Largue. Her real name is de Largue."

"Is it? How do you know?"

"My father was mixed up with her. She is a bad lot."

"She doesn't look over good."

"I suppose the constables keep an eye on her?"

"Yes. But there is no fear of her trying to make a bolt while that wretch Claremont has the least bit of life in his miserable carcass. She's there howling and crying and wringing her hands beside him, and yells like a wild animal when anyone tries to move her."

"Is he much injured?"

"Fatally, I believe."

"Turk did his work well," patting the great head of the dog, who had come out to greet his old master.

"Yes, indeed. But for him it is probable the murderer would have got off scot-free; as it is, I think he will soon go to join his victim."

"I must see him before he does. He must be made to confess all. I suspect he had a hand in my father's sudden death."

"Do you, though?" asked Blackie, in intense astonishment.

"Yes. Where is Mr. Vane?"

"In there," pointing to the library, "with Scargill, Evelyn, Wavenell, and one or two others."

"I must see him."

"You think it necessary?" inquired the other, who had heard of his father's treachery towards Chichester, and knew they had not spoken since the latter had learnt it.

"Yes. At a time like this private differences must be set aside."

"Of course. Will you see the ladies first?"

"Is—Is—Opal—there?" he stammered.

"No."

"Then I will see them."

"How—how—does—she bear it?" he asked, as they crossed the hall.

"She is terribly cut up, and shocked."

"Naturally."

"And reproaches herself bitterly with not having done her duty and loved him. As though she could help that, poor girl," said Blackie, tenderly, "when she married him solely for our sakes; and as to doing her duty, I heard him tell her she had tried to do all she could when he was dying."

"That will console her by-and-by, after the first horror of the affair has passed away."

"I hope so," and young Vane pushed open the door and entered the dining-room, where Lady Dorothy, Ruby and her husband, Mrs. Vane, Lady Scargill, and some others were sitting.

Those who lived near had changed their dresses, but Lady Dorothy and Ruby still wore their evening finery, and had cloaks wrapped about them to hide it. All were pale, and startled, and nervous.

"So you have come!" whispered Lady Dorothy.

"Yes," returned Paul. "I will tell you why," and he explained his dark suspicions with regard to his father's death.

"You must see Claremont at once," she exclaimed, after hearing his explanation, with some of her old briskness and decision.

"Why at once?"

"Because he is in a precarious condition, and may die any minute."

"Indeed?"

"Yes. The wretch must be made to speak—must explain all."

"It may be difficult to make him do so."

"It may," she agreed.

But their fears in that respect proved groundless.

After a stiff meeting between Copeland Vane and Paul, the gentlemen adjourned to the servants' quarters, where, stretched on a bed in his own room, the murderer lay.

He presented a truly horrible appearance. His head was swathed in bandages, his face was torn and lacerated, his throat and chest mauled frightfully, while his hands were bitten through and through, some of the fingers actually crushed by the powerful jaws that had seized them.

Mr. Wavenell explained to him in a few words the nature of their visit, and pressed him to con-

fees and explain what prompted him to commit such a fearful crime.

"How—long—can—I—leave!" he asked, looking at Linton, who sat near him to apply restoratives when necessary.

"Only a few hours," returned the doctor, at which the wretched Valerie, who knelt by the bed, her long black hair streaming over her shoulders, her face pallid and tear-stained, uttered a despairing cry.

"Are—you—certain—m'sieu!" he queried, speaking slowly and with extreme difficulty, owing to the wounds in his throat.

"Quite certain. You will never see another sun rise," replied Linton, firmly.

"Helas!—Then—I—wool—tell. What matters. You—can—do—nusing—to—my—dead—bodes. Si I—could—leave—it—would—be—different—and—not one—mot—would you drag—from—me."

And then, slowly and brokenly, he told his story.

It appeared Valerie de Largue was his cousin and his betrothed. She lived on the outskirts of Versailles with her widowed mother, and made a little money by making lace and artificial flowers, while he, Victor Claremont, was waiter at an hotel in Paris, where he worked hard, trying to earn sufficient to enable him to marry the girl he loved.

The course of their affection ran smoothly, until in an evil hour Fishlake Chichester, visiting Versailles, came across Valerie, and admiring her swarthy, handsome face, made proposals, held out alluring baits, which tempted her—for she was vain, and loved ease and fine clothes—to become his mistress.

After a while he tired of her and cast her off without mercy; and while starving with her child Claremont saw her again, and heard the miserable story of shame and betrayal. Then he swore to have revenge on the man who had ruined his promised wife.

When Chichester came to Paris again he managed to get a place in the hotel where he stayed, and made himself so useful to the profligate that he engaged him as valet when his own man fell ill from the effects of a dose administered by Claremont, and took him back to Temple Dene.

Meanwhile Valerie, though well supplied with money by her French lover, kept writing appealing letters to Fishlake, and at last was brought over to England by Paul, and established in a shop.

This tardy act of justice did not satisfy the infuriated and wronged woman, who saw when too late what a mistake she had made, and she kept urging Victor to avenge her.

The opportunity offered the night Chichester's dissolute companions, after cheating him at cards, laid their hands on every portable article of value they could find, and fled with the two women. Claremont helped them to get off with their spoils, and after doing so returned to the turret-chamber, and putting his thumb on his master's windpipe, who slept heavily from the effects of drugged wine, held it there till he ceased to breathe, and then flung him face downwards amid the debris of broken bottles and glasses.

No suspicion fell on him. Why should it? He was apparently a model servant, much attached to his master, and the fugitives were the objects of suspicion.

Besides, he remained at Temple Dene, afraid to leave, lest by doing so he might attract attention; and when Mr. Spragg became master he felt secure, and, in addition to what he had robbed Chichester of, commenced a series of petty thefts on his new employer.

This went on for some time unnoticed. The American was so enormously rich that a sovereign or a five-pound note now and then was not missed, and he was very anxious to amuse a good round sum, as Valerie, whom he still loved passionately, had promised to go off with him to some far-distant country when he had sufficient to keep her in ease and comfort.

He managed to get her into the house as maid to Mrs. Spragg, and between them they did well in the thieving way until the disappearance of

the diamond studs and some other jewellery aroused suspicion, and he felt it was time to make himself scarce. He was urged on to this by seeing Paul visit the house, and knowing that he would recognise Valerie he determined to set off at once, and that, too, before the detective Mr. Spragg had gone into Evesham to consult arrived on the scene. His plans were all laid.

He would steal away quietly while his master and mistress were occupied with their friends at dinner, and he stole up to the turret chamber to collect his ill-gotten gains. He kept the notes, gold, and jewels in the old cabinet there, knowing they were perfectly safe in it.

None of the servants would go there after dark, and didn't care to do so in the daytime; they avoided it sedulously, while he knew Mr. Spragg had a horror of it, and talked about having the secret door in his bedroom that led to it walled up.

He thought his master was already dressed and with his guests, and his amazement was extreme when he turned and saw him standing in the arched doorway.

He did not want to shed more blood, yet knew, somehow or other, that he must pass the man who barred his way.

He was caught in the act of taking away things that had been mined. He could give no satisfactory explanation as to why he was in the turret-chamber at that hour, and he knew, if charged with theft, the other and darker crime would probably be brought to light, and he suffer the extreme penalty of the law. So he raised the knife he held in his hand, and struck down the man who stood between him and liberty, thinking that if he were quick he would get off clear; for Valerie was waiting in the corridor for him, with wigs and disguises which they could don, and their passages were taken to America.

But Turk circumvented him; and as he dashed down the winding steps and flung back the secret door the dog, with a fierce snarl, flew at his throat and bore him to the ground, tearing and rending his flesh like a tiger, as he poured out the pent-up hatred of years.

"You-know—the—rest," muttered the dying wretch; "*cet animal a été—has—killed—me—avenged—son maître*," and with a last glare of hatred at the son of the man who had wronged his love, and on whom he had had a terrible revenge, the double murderer shut his eyes on those around him, and oh this world for ever, thus cheating the hangman of a job.

The gentlemen hurriedly left the room, while the wretched Valerie was dragged off in an insensible state to Evesham prison, and after a long trial was sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude, whilst undergoing which she died, and joined the partner of her crimes.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The next week passed slowly and drearily at Temple Dene. Mr. Spragg lay in state in the house which had been his home for but a short time. All were sorry for him, high and low, rich and poor. Many acts of kindness to his poorer tenants came to light now that he was gone, passed away, out of reach of praise or censure, kindness or indifference.

He had been a generous, easy-going landlord, lavish and considerate as any blue-blooded aristocrat could be, and had never refused anything to his tenants, either in the way of improvements or forgiving them their rent.

So the common people came and brought their offering of flowers, and gazed at the still form, and passed out to make room for others who wished to stare at the murdered man.

Opal was persuaded not to see him after death. The expression on his face, and his general aspect, was calculated to shock a sensitive nature. There was a look of horror about the half-closed eyes, a ghastliness about the darkened nostrils and pallid lips that, stiff and rigid, showed the great teeth, and made them more horrible, and gave a more frightful appearance to the whole face than it had borne in life.

She yielded to advice of her friends, and did not go to see the husband whom living she had loathed, and who dead she regretted most bitterly, reproaching herself with her want of love and affection towards him as she recalled his patience under her indifference, his never-failing solicitude for her welfare, and the unbounded wealth of love he had given her, which she had rejected, and passed over with icy coldness.

She could not help it, she had been powerless to train her feelings as they should have gone, and yet—and yet how she wished now matters had been on a different footing between them! The remorse and regret would never quite leave her.

She did not rejoice that she was free, that Death with his sickle had cut the bonds of her slavery. She gave that not a single thought—was only full of horror and self-loathing, an awe that made her shun her fellows, and keep to the solitude of her room.

She did not appear on the morning of the funeral, but sat watching the procession as it wound its slow length along from the retirement of her own boudoir.

An immense string of carriages followed the open hearse, with its four white horses, and load of lovely white blossoms that entirely concealed the handsome silver-mounted oak coffin.

In the first carriage rode the chief mourners, Copeland Vane, his three eldest sons, and Lord Mount Severn; in the next Bobbie, Mr. Wavenell, Mr. Bevoir and Paul Chichester—the latter somewhat against his will, but he had been pressed to appear by Vane; and having been advised by Lady Dorothy, whom he consulted on the subject, to do so, he consented to swell the army of mourners. As her ladyship argued, very few knew he had been engaged to Opal, so his staying away would attract more attention than his attending. The rest of the carriages were filled with the neighbouring gentry, who had both liked and esteemed Washington C. Spragg, and some American friends, while the tenantry brought up the rear, marching four abreast.

Once in Dene churchyard the procession came to a standstill, not opposite the time-worn, weather-stained marble structure of the Chichesters, but opposite a vault which an eccentric Indian nabob purchased on settling at Dene, and then offered for a mere song when, finding the English climate did not agree with him, he wished to return to the East. It was a very magnificent affair, in gray granite, and Copeland Vane congratulated himself, as he looked at it, to think what a bargain he had made.

Opal might not have shared his feelings had she known, but she didn't know. In her distress she was glad that her father busied himself about all details, so saving her, though at the same time she wished all honour and respect to be paid to her husband's remains, and put no limit on the amount to be spent on the burial-place.

She knew he could not rest in the Chichester's vault. Paul had not said that when he sold Temple Dene. There was only room for two there, and he wished to lie there himself, and in the old days hoped another would lie by his side, close together in their last resting-place.

The solemn service was soon gone through, the coffin and its load of flowers lowered, and then they all drove back to hear the will read.

The library was full of people, as Mr. Wavenell, in clear distinct tones, read the document aloud. Opal, in widow's weeds, looking pale and sad, yet lovely, sat between her aunt and sister. Mr. Vane lounged in an easy chair behind the lawyer, facing his wife and Paul, the latter of whom he watched as a cat would a mouse.

There was something working in his crafty brain that made him wondrous civil to, and watchful of, the young man. Next to Paul stood Blackie, leaning against the chimney-piece; then Bertie, Bob, and the Earl in a group; and further on Mr. Bevoir, two American gentlemen, the trustees, and others filling up the corners of the spacious room.

(To be continued.)

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL-COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST-SUPPER.

TOWLE'S PENNYROYAL PILLS

FOR FEMALES.

QUICKLY CORRECT ALL IRREGULARITIES, REMOVE ALL OBSTRUCTIONS, and relieve the distressing symptoms so prevalent with the sex. Boxes 1/1 & 2/9 (contains three times the quantity of all Chemists. Sent anywhere on receipt of 15 or 24 stamps, by E. T. TOWLE & Co., Manufacturers, Dryden St., Nottingham.

Beware of Imitations, injurious and worthless.

KEARSLEY'S 30 YEARS' REPUTATION

WIDOW WELCH'S
FEMALE PILLS

Awarded Certificate of Merit for the cure of Irregularities, Anemia, and all Female Complaints. They have the approval of the Medical Profession. Beware of Imitations. The only genuine and original are in White Paper Wrappers. Boxes 1/6 & 2/6, and 2s. 6d. of all Chemists. 2s. 6d. box contains three times the pills. Or by post, 14 or 24 stamps, by the makers, C. and G. KARSLEY, 17, North Street, Westminster. Sold in the Colonies.

HAVE YOU TRIED KEATING'S LOZENGES FOR YOUR COUGH?

ANY DOCTOR WILL TELL YOU there is no better Cough Medicine. "One gives relief. If you suffer from cough try them but once: they will cure, and they will not injure your health: an increasing sale of over 60 years is a certain test of their value. Sold in 1900, time.



"No shape but this can please your dainty eye."—*Shakespeare*.
EXQUISITE MODELS.
PERFECT FIT.
GUARANTEED WEAR.

Y & N

DIAGONAL SEAM
CORSETS.

Will not split in the Seams nor tear in the Fabric.
Made in White, Black, and all the Fashionable Colours and Shades in Italian Cloth, Satin, and Goutil.

4/11, 5/11, 6/11, 7/11
per pair and upwards.
THREE GOLD MEDALS.
Sold by the principal Drapers and Ladies' Outfitters.

ALL the emery used in the world comes from the little island of Naxos, near Greece. As it is one of the hardest substances known, ordinary quarrying tools cannot be used to cut it out.

A LONDON firm of electricians has patented a novel decorative system of lighting rooms. The main idea is the insertion of transparent panels, faced with negatives of well-known photographs, through which filters subdued electric light, the effect being somewhat the same as the light of a church, and eminently becoming. There is no glare, and the pictures can be chosen according to the taste of the owner of the room.

FACETIE.

NED: "Miss Slimly's figure is certainly not her fortune." Ted: "No; but her father's figure is."

TOMKINS: "Is your wife a rapid reader?" Snodgrass: "Yes, unless I'm waiting for the paper."

HE: "Would you be very angry if I should kiss you?" She: "Of course I would. But why didn't you kiss me first, and then ask?"

WHITE: "I wish I knew something that would strengthen my memory." Black: "Lend me five shillings, and you'll never forget it."

SHE: "Did you let him kiss you before you were engaged?" She: "Yes. That's how we happen to be engaged. Papa came along."

CALLOWS: "If your engagement is broken, I suppose you will return me the ring!" Marie: "Why, certainly, if you can pick out yours from this boxful."

"My wife and I," remarked Jones, "never quarrel. When things go right I give her all the credit, and when they go wrong I take all the blame."

It is better to make a great many men happy by being engaged to them than to make one miserable by marrying him. This is intended for the sweet young lady who can't cook.

"JOHNNY, didn't I tell you to divide those Chinese crackers with your sister?" "Yes, sir. An' I did." "She says you let them all off yourself." "Yes, sir; but I let her listen to 'em go off."

GEORGE: "Suppose a fellow's best girl gets cross when you ask for a kiss?" Henry: "Take it without asking." "Suppose she gets cross then?" "Then you've got some other fellow's girl."

"It strikes me," said the first sensible man, "that Bryan wants the earth." "Yes," the other agreed, "and it strikes me he'll resemble the earth very soon." "In what way?" "He'll be fattened at the polls."

CALLER: "Your next-door neighbour seems quite nice." Mrs. Upstart: "Hah! They're very plain, common people." "Really?" "Yes. They pay cash for everything at the grocer's and butcher's."

"GRACIOUS! That's a disreputable-looking umbrella you're carrying." "Yes. If I were Markley I'd be ashamed to own such a thing." "Oh! it's his, eh?" "Yes. I borrowed it from him about a year ago."

"Is there anything I enjoy," said the man with a placid look, "it is to get on the river bank and lie about fishing." "Couldn't you stay at home and lie about fishing just as easily?" asked the lean man.

"WHAT," asked the stage-struck youth, "is the first thing I must do to become a great actor?" "Acquire a lot of mannerisms that you can cling to through life," replied the manager.

HUSBAND (at dinner): "My! My! This is a regular banquet—worthy of a Dalmatian. Finest spread I've seen in an age. What's up? Do you expect company?" Wife: "No, but I presume the cook does."

THE BACHELOR: "I don't suppose a man's name ever changes when he gets married." The Benedict: "Oh, yes, it does. Before we were married, my wife called me 'Dearest,' and now she says, 'Here, you!'"

"I see that a Washington chemist fired an egg on the asphalt pavement in front of his store on the recent record-breaking hot ray there." "Thanks for letting me down so easy." "What do you mean?" "I was afraid you were going to say that he hatched it out."

"It's impossible for you to lift yourself up by your bootstraps, isn't it, Johnny?" asked the teacher of a small pupil. "Yes'm," answered Johnny. "Now," continued the teacher, "can you tell me why it is impossible?" "I guess it's because I wear shoes," was the logical reply.

FAMILY FRIEND: "I congratulate you, my dear sir, on the marriage of your daughter. I see you are gradually getting all the girls off your hands." Old Olivebranch: "Off my hands—yes; but the worst of it is, I have to keep their husbands on their feet."

MAMMA: "Yes, darling, those dear little boys have no father and no mother—and no good Aunt Jane. Aren't you sorry for them?" Freddy (no great admirer of his stung aunt): "Oh, poor little boys!" With cheerful alacrity—"Mummy dear, may I give them Aunt Jane?"

A FARMER'S man took the village doctor a note the other day, which, with some difficulty, spelt out: "Please send me a bottle of fixie." "Hallo!" exclaimed the doctor. "F-i-x-i-e doesn't spell physic!" "Don't it?" answered the rustic. "What does it spell, then?" The doctor gave it up.

"SINCE you've been courting my daughter, young man," said the old gentleman, severely, "I find my gas bill has considerably increased." "Perhaps it is the fault of the meter, sir," suggested the young man, timidly. "Yes, it is," agreed the old gentleman. "You're the meter, and you meet her too often!"

"HENRY," said the woman who had given her husband a lovely combination writing-table and sewing-machine on his birthday, "I hope you haven't forgotten to-morrow will be my birthday."

"No, dear," he replied. "I've bought you some cigars. The box will be useful to keep bob-bins and buttons in."

"MRS. FEATHERWELL'S new hat is the very latest style, isn't it?" remarked Mr. Blykins. "Yes," answered his wife. "But how do you know it? You say you pay no attention to fashions?" "There couldn't be any mistake in this case. If it weren't in the latest style, she wouldn't dare to wear anything so ugly."

"WHEN I was once in danger from a lion," said an old African explorer, "I tried sitting down and staring at him, as I had no weapons." "How did it work?" asked his companion. "Perfectly. The lion did not offer to touch me." "Strange! How do you account for it?" "Well, sometimes I have thought it was because I sat on a branch of a very tall tree."

A PALE and dishevelled Frenchman, who had not found "a life on the ocean wave" all that could be expected, was slinking into a steamer chair when a passenger asked, cheerily: "Ah, good-morning, monsieur; have you breakfasted?" "No, monsieur," answered the pallid Frenchman; "I have not breakfasted; on the contrary."

MRS. TROWBRIDGE: "I'm going to cut Mrs. Uterbock from now on, the mean thing!" Mrs. Teasdale: "Why, did she ask for bread-and-treacle at your tea?" "No; she was looking at the cracker jar that I had decorated with Chinese characters, and remarked to Mrs. Reading that she didn't believe China was as bad as it's painted."

"You ought to have seen me hustling to get out of the way when the explosion took place," said Freddy. "Old fellow," responded Onolly, "I shall regret it to my dying day that I didn't see you. I was too busy watching the minor effects of the explosion. Would you mind doing it now to show me how you look when you hustle?"

"How absurd," remarked the cabman, "for that man to swear merely because he lost the train." "But wouldn't you do the same thing in his place?" replied the gatekeeper. "Very likely," said the cabman; "but I wasn't thinking of that. I was only thinking how lucky for me it was that he lost his train. He will have to hire me to take him back now, don't you see?"

TOMMY was presented lately by his elder sister with a neat penwiper, for use at a school which he had just begun attending. He admired it, but remarked: "I sha'n't have much use for it, Jennie." "Why not, Tommy? You use a pen every day at school?" "Yes, I know that." "Why don't you use a penwiper, then?" she replied. "Because I always wipe my pen down the side of the next boy's hair."

PARKE: "Your wife tells me you have just bought her a new wheel." LAKE: "Yes. She can now run home from the tennis-courts and see the children occasionally."

WINKS: "Folks say you always leave immediately after the sermon so as to escape the contribution box." Jinks (holly): "It's a base slander! The only reason I start so early is simply to get first pick of the umbrellas."

THE WORLD'S BREAD SUPPLY.

"THERE are at present about 517,000,000 bread-eaters in the world," writes R. V. Stannard Baker, in the November WINDSOR MAGAZINE. "An increase equal to two Londons is yearly swelling the enormous figures, the additions coming partly from births in the more advanced countries, and partly from the treading of the consumers of rice, rye, and the like into a preference for wheat foods. The deductions of years have shown that each bread-eater—man, woman, and child—will consume a barrel of flour (four and one-half bushels of wheat) every year. The French, the English, and the Americans eat more than the average; the Russians and the Germans eat less. On the basis of this average, the bread-eating world requires more than 2,300,000,000 bushels of wheat every twelve months to supply its table with bread. If the wheat-fields of the world produce as much as this, then there is plenty and prosperity the world over; if the production is less, there is suffering and starvation. Few people realise how closely the crop is consumed each year. According to the statistician of the United States Department of Agriculture, the world's total production of wheat in 1897 was 2,226,745,000 bushels—not enough by millions of bushels to supply the world's food demand and furnish seed for the crops of another year. Consequently, countries of the earth where the crop was light were visited by want and high prices, in India the need even touching the point of famine. During the following year, 1898, the crop was enormous, reaching a total production reported as 2,879,924,000 bushels, but this is probably an over-estimate; and, as a consequence, there was plenty of food in nearly every part of the world."

Not long ago Sir William Crookes, the distinguished President of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, considering the proportion between wheat production and wheat consumption, ventured to name the year 1921 as a date when the world's bread-eaters would cry for more wheat than the world's farmers could produce. There is good reason to believe, as Mr. Edward Atkinson has pointed out, that Sir William has vastly under-estimated the wheat growing possibilities of the earth, at least of the United States. Yet the statistics from which such prophecies are drawn show how very closely the consumer treads upon the heels of the producer, and how imperative is the necessity of distributing the crop—grown perhaps half a world away from the centres of consumption—as soon as it is shaken from the threshes in a million fields, in order that every white man shall have his loaf, and have it before his last supply has run out.

Great Britain eats her entire wheat crop in about thirteen weeks, and then she must be supplied immediately with the products of Minnesota or Central Russia, or India, or else she must suffer. If the United Kingdom could be completely blockaded, say by the ships of allied Europe, her population would probably be totally extinguished by starvation within three months. The like is true of every country in Western Europe, although in some of them actual starvation could be much longer averted. This immediate requirement of the densely settled portions of the earth for a constant supply of bread overrides all laws and diplomatic and political considerations; it disregards customs duties and the boundaries of nations; and it is the foundation of the world's money systems; for wheat must move, that men may have bread."

SOCIETY.

THE Duchess of Connaught is having a course of treatment at Dresden at the hands of Professor von Rejher, who very successfully treated her some few years ago when she was suffering from rheumatism.

THE Queen, who has taken the deepest interest in the approaching visit of the Duke and Duchess of York to Australia, has now decided that the Duke, as her representative, is to have a guard of honour representing every arm of the British Army, including the gallant volunteers. This will be quite a unique arrangement.

IN the old days the Queen was always attended when out of London by either the Prime Minister or a Secretary of State. This rule was found to be so inconvenient that the attendance of a Minister at Windsor Castle was dispensed with many years ago, and considerably later at Osborne also. Now the Queen is attended by a Minister only at Balmoral, and any member of the Cabinet is eligible for the duty.

ALREADY the Queen has been planning out her spring tour. Her Majesty was most desirous of again visiting Ireland, but the continued serious illness of the Empress Frederick has practically decided her to change these plans. In all probability, her health and strength and other considerations being taken into account, the Queen will make a trip to the Riviera in March. It having been arranged that if the health of the Empress Frederick should continue to improve, she is to be removed there. The Queen could in these circumstances be with her eldest daughter, without having the fatigue of taking a special journey.

QUEEN ELIZABETH OF ROMANIA is as deft with her fingers as she is clever with her brain. At a doll show held in Berlin the leading feature was a collection of dolls exhibited "by the Queen of Roumania," every article of dress and decoration of which was made by herself. A gem of the Royal handiwork was a charming reproduction in miniature of the carriage used at the Roumanian coronation, drawn by eight tiny horses, whose silver harness is a marvel of workmanship. The group is valued at £3,000, and was afterwards sent to the Paris Exhibition.

IT is now practically decided that the Duke and Duchess of York shall not take any of their children with them to the Antipodes. The little folks will probably stay part of the time with the Queen, and the rest of the time with the Princess of Wales at Sandringham; but it will distress the Duchess of York to leave her little ones for so long a time, for she gives them far more personal attention than is perhaps realised, and nothing gives her keener pleasure than to be able to give up an afternoon entirely to these wee people. The Duchess of York is an adept at amusing children, and was always hailed with screams of delight by the little daughters of the Duchess of Fife when she used to visit them at Sheen before her marriage.

Among Prince Albert's wedding presents is an inlaid table of rare workmanship from the Pope, with an autograph letter from the donor.

THE King of Sweden never touches a gun. The King of Belgium has shot only once in his life, and the Sultan of Turkey cannot bear to see a gun.

THE little Grand Duchess Olga of Russia may be said to be the richest baby in the world. The week she was born a fortune of one million pounds was settled on her, and it is said that this huge sum was safely invested in British and French securities.

THE German Emperor is to be crowned as King of Prussia on Friday, January 18th, at the Royal Castle in Königsberg, and the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Connaught, and Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein are to represent our Royal Family at the ceremony. The coronation is to take place in the historic Moskoviter Hall, which is the largest hall in Germany, and the Court festivities will extend over several days.

STATISTICS.

OF a thousand persons, only one reaches the age of a hundred years.

THERE are 2,800 church bell ringers in the diocese of Oxford. This is the largest number in any English diocese. Exeter comes second, and Devon third.

THE age at which children begin to work is eleven years in England, fourteen years in Switzerland, thirteen years in Germany, and twelve years in France, Holland, Russia, and Belgium.

CANADA lacks only 287,000 square miles to be as large as the whole Continent of Europe; it is nearly thirty times as large as Great Britain and Ireland, and is 300,000 square miles larger than the United States.

GEMS.

THE loveliest things in life are but shadows, and they come and go, and change and fade away as rapidly.

GENEROSITY, to deserve the name, comprises the desire and the effort to benefit others without reference to self.

To commiserate is something more than to give, for money is external to a man's self; but he who bestows compassion communicates his own soul.

IDEAS make their ways in silence, like the waters that, filtering behind the rocks of the Alps, loosen them from the mountains on which they rest.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

TO PICKLE ONIONS.—Choose very small onions, peel them. Take a quart of the best white wine vinegar, and dissolve in it two good pinches of salt; bring to the boil and skim. Put in one quart of the peeled onions, and cook till they look transparent, which should be in three or four minutes. Place in jars filled to the brim, and cork and seal.

TO MAKE CURRY.—It will only be necessary to give directions for the making of a good curry sauce, then all that is required is to warm up the meat in it, and serve, surrounded by a wall of boiled rice. Ingredients: A pint of weak soup, two onions, one apple, one ounce of butter, one ounce of flour, one tablespoonful of curry powder, half-teaspoonful of lemon juice, half-gill of cream, salt. Peel the onion and apple, chop finely, and fry them in the butter until coloured; stir in the flour and curry powder, and fry another minute or two. Add the stock and simmer gently half an hour; then stir in cream, salt, and lemon-juice, lastly the meat. It must not boil again after this. The cream may be omitted, and half an ounce of butter used in its place.

FRICASSEED EGGS.—Ingredients: One pint of milk, one onion, two cloves, one carrot, a small bunch of parsley, four or more eggs, two ounces of butter, one and a half ounces of flour, salt and pepper. Put the milk in a saucepan, with the cloves stuck in the onion, the carrot and parsley, and let this simmer for half an hour. Boil the eggs for twenty minutes. Then shell and cut each in half. Melt the butter in a pan with the flour, and stir it in smoothly. Next pour in the milk, and stir it over the fire till it thickens. Season well with salt, pepper and lemon-juice. Then put the eggs in the sauce, taking care you do not knock out the yolks. Let them get very hot in the sauce. Arrange the eggs carefully in a hot dish, pour over the sauce, and garnish with small pieces of fried bread and chopped parsley.

MISCELLANEOUS.

OPAL-MINING is one of the latest Australian mineral industries.

MANY animals in desert regions never have any water except the dew on vegetation.

IN some parts of Russia the only food for the people consists at present of acorns, leaves, and the soft bark of trees.

IT is ascertained, on scientific data, that the air resistance to a railway train of average weight moving sixty miles an hour is 11,374 lb.—nearly six tons.

FROM an interpretation of a passage in the Koran, Moslems are forbidden to have shades to their eyes, hence the absence of the peak both from the fez and the turban.

AN eminent naturalist tells how a blackbird will stand at the side of a hanging wasp's nest and deliberately tear it in pieces, in order to get at the larva, apparently undisturbed by the swarm of angry insects.

ALMOST as soon as they are you of the shell quail seem to have the power of making themselves invisible at the wave of a wand. The ground may be as bare as a floor, but somehow they manage to vanish utterly from the eye.

THE British War Office has given orders for the purchase of a number of small steel shields to cover the vital parts about the hearts of the soldiers. The shields weigh about seven pounds, and in tests have turned bullets at 700 yards.

THE APPROACH OF CHRISTMAS.

IT is difficult to find anything fresh to say of the delightful productions of Raphael Tuck and Sons. Again we are favoured with a charming selection of cards, gift books, and calendars in almost endless variety. It is truly an Imperial collection and fitly inaugurates the New Century. We find 1,200 entirely new sets of cards, embodying some 3,000 individual designs, and ranging over upwards of 100 separate and distinct styles. High above all these new styles towers the "Gem Pendant" series, an epoch making, graceful double folding card of an entirely new shape, and it is introduced in no less than ninety sets of the collection. The New Century is indeed well opened with this beautiful artistic departure. The humorous cards will be voted "the very thing." Of all these the effective "Chrome Printed Cards," especially distinguished this season for their distinctness, maintain their ascendancy of about three to one over the charming Black-and-White series, but all the novel features and shapes are introduced in both of these styles. The toy books and juvenile gift books, which include "Father Tuck's Annual" and "Father Tuck's Toy Books" and "Juvenile Gift Books," are to be reckoned among the household requisites of the nursery. This year the collection is larger, more varied, more interesting, and more instructive than ever. Among the art novelties are some remarkable military productions to which this relief art novelty idea most particularly lends itself. We take this opportunity of calling attention to this firm's artistic post-cards. With a view of fostering the love of art, and encouraging the collecting of their post-cards, Messrs. Tuck offer £1,000, divided into over 100 prizes, the first prize being £100, and the smallest prize £2 2s., to collectors of the largest number of "Tuck's" post-cards that have passed through the post, no matter to whom addressed. Every post-card issued by Tuck's, whether view, military, patriotic, figure, animal, humorous, or whatever the subject may be, is eligible to compete so long as the name of the firm, and a miniature impression of the trade-mark (the Esel and Palette) appear on the picture side, and the Royal Coat of Arms on the address side of the post-card. Anyone may compete, no entrance fee or charge of any kind being made. Full particulars of the competition will be announced through the local dealers in January, 1901.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

R. B.—Apply to an engraver.
 C. G.—Consult a work on astronomy.
 A. J.—No, but he can issue a summons.
 ARTHUR.—British coinage is mostly made at the Mint in London.
 CHARLES.—Call at the office, and they will tell you what to do.
 DOUBTFUL.—We should doubt the wisdom of accepting such an offer.
 A. H.—A judicial separation may be had in any magisterial court.
 CLARE.—France comes next to England in the matter of naval strength.
 QUERRIST.—Any age, if capable of understanding the nature of an oath.
 C. D.—The matter is so technical that you must consult a solicitor.
 B. B.—Fourpenny pieces were finally withdrawn from circulation in 1866.
 SUSIE.—Do not let it come to the boil; remove the saucepan just before.
 WORRIED.—Better come to some arrangement for paying by instalments.
 G. B.—The Bank of England is not under the management of the Government.
 INQUIRER.—We are unable to give you any particulars as to where they are held.
 A READER.—If you actually sell at the door you need a pedlar's or hawkers' license.
 LEMMY.—Write to the General Post Office for permission, and if they agree, keep their reply.
 L. C.—An I O U being a simple acknowledgment of a debt, does not require a stamp of any kind.
 JACK.—The first means military law; the second, the law applied to the trials of naval and military men only.
 A. L.—You might try rubbing it over or cleaning it with milk, and then polishing briskly with a soft cloth.
 FRANCESCA.—In washing black stockings, always rub the soap on the wrong side, they will then keep in good colour.
 A. D.—The first Drury Lane Theatre was built in 1668, destroyed by fire in 1672, rebuilt in 1674, pulled down in 1791, and rebuilt in 1794.
 ANXIOUS TO KNOW.—When there is no will one-third of the personality goes to the widow and the remainder to the child or children in equal portions.
 UNHAPPY.—Write to boy's commanding officer, enclosing his birth certificate, and he will be released if under seventeen, except he joined as a boy.
 BRILL.—Give notice to the vicar of the parish, or the minister of the chapel, according to where you wish to be married. Either would give you information.
 IGNORANT.—The letters "R. S. V. P." on an invitation card are the initials of the four French words, *Repondez s'il vous plait*, meaning "answer, if you please."
 DORA.—Rub together in a mortar equal parts of hard-boiled yolk of egg and pure glycerine. This will soften some skins on which ordinary cold cream has no effect.
 INDIGNANT TOM.—The young lady is evidently retaining you as a tutor, until some one more desirable in the way of wealth and social position presents himself for acceptance.
 AMBITIOUS.—Send your story to the office of the publication for which it seems best suited. The opinion of an expert is more likely to be just than that of a personal friend of the writer.
 C. C.—Food by itself is not sufficient; the whole round of habits—eating, working, recreation, and resting—must be taken into strict account by the individual who properly studies his health.
 HENRY.—Mix fine emery powder and sweet oil together, saturate a piece of spongy fig-tree wood with the mixture, and apply vigorously. Paraffin oil is often used in place of sweet oil, but it is not as lasting in its effects.
 ANNE.—Keep them a few days after they are gathered; then pour boiling vinegar over them, and when cold, cover. They will not be fit to eat for some months, but are then finely flavoured, and by many preferred to capers.
 FETTERED.—Ants very much object to the smell of cloves; and if these are liberally sprinkled in any cupboard, which they intend they will soon disappear. Cloves that have been in the house a long time, and have lost their freshness, are no good.
 H. B.—A cloth wet in spirits of turpentine and laid among garments when put away for the summer will keep the moths away, if the garments are properly cleansed and cared for before boxing or putting in paper sacks with the ends pasted together.
 HARRY.—A volunteer on joining a regiment agrees to serve three or four years; on completion of that period he can immediately resign; particulars regarding method of resigning should be found in your regimental almanac; if not, apply to your officers.

ROB.—Emigration to Johannesburg is positively forbidden meanwhile, and will not be open or safe for six months to come, at least; get fullest guidance from Government Emigrants' Information Office, 31, Broadway, London, E.W., gratis on application.

MILLY.—Your cat has probably reached her limit; but give her a dose of castor oil—a teaspoonful—and after that a little warmed milk at intervals; should she seem very weak half a teaspoonful of brandy may once or twice be mixed with the milk administered.

BETSY JANE.—A little mild soap and water is the only cleansing they will stand, and that must be done with great care. If the lacquer is destroyed or injured, the only thing that remains is to remove the places, have them chemically cleaned, reacquainted, and again fastened on.

COMICUS.—Neither the North Pole nor the South Pole has ever been reached by man. There is no record of such a visitation; and there is no reason to suppose that the poles present any material features different from other spots within a hundred miles of the northern or southern extremities of the earth.

CHLOE.—Baths the face at night just before retiring, with very hot water, drying it with a soft towel, and then rub in very gently some cold cream, perfumed or not. In the morning wash your face well with hot water and soap, and then bathe it in tepid water, so that all the scum may be removed, finishing off with cold water.

REGULAR READER.—Salt and water is the best thing, allowing a tablespoonful of salt to a gallon of cold water. Have the matting thoroughly shaken first, to free it from dust, then wash it with the salt-and-water, making it only sufficiently wet to remove the dirt. Wipe with a dry cloth. Stains that water will not move should be rubbed with alcohol.

SEASIDE GOLDEN-ROD.

GRACEFUL, teasing plume of glowing gold,
 Waving lonely on the rocky ledge;
 Leaning seaward, lovely to behold,
 Offhanging to the high cliff's ragged edge.

Burning in the pure September sky,
 Spikes of gold against the stainless blue,
 Do you watch the vessels drifting by?
 Does the quiet day seem long to you?

Up to you I climb, O perfect shape!
 Poised so lightly 'twixt the sky and sea;
 Looking out o'er headland, dreg and cape,
 O'er the ocean's vague immensity.

Up to you my human thoughts I bring,
 Sit me down your peaceful watch to share;
 Do you hear the waves below us sing?
 Feel the soft fanning of the air?

How much of life's rapture is your right?
 In earth's joy what may your portion be?
 Backed by breeze, touched by tender light,
 Fed by dew, and sung to by the sea!

Something of delight and of content
 Must be yours, however vaguely known;
 And your grace is mutely eloquent,
 And your beauty makes the golden a throne.

Matters not to you, O golden flower!
 That such eyes of worship watch you away;
 But you make more sweet the dreampful hour,
 And you crown for me the tranquil day.

B. F. C.—If the marriage is by banns and not by license, the parties must have been resident in the parish fifteen days. If they reside in different parishes the banns must be published in each parish on three Sundays preceding the marriage. The clergyman is entitled to seven days' notice of the banns in writing.

LITTLE JANE.—Hair brushes should be washed in hot or tepid water to which soda or ammonia has been added. The brushes should be dipped in and out of the water till clean, taking care that the backs and handles do not get wet. After rinsing in cold water, put them in the air to dry. They should never be dried close to the fire, or the bristles will become discoloured.

FADLY.—First grasp the ends of the frame in the right hand, and hold them tightly against the handle. Still holding, roll from the opposite end with the other hand. Nine out of ten people do this simply hold the handle with the right hand instead of grasping the frame. An umbrella that has once been badly rolled never looks nice again, because the frame is slightly twisted.

MAY.—To wash lace curtains, let them soak for a half hour in warm suds made with good white soap. Wash carefully by squeezing up and down, and by rubbing must be done gingerly. Rinse in three or four cold waters and blue them. Dry on curtain stretchers, or lacking them pin point by point to cotton cloths. Never dry curtains on a line.

CHRIS.—First rub thoroughly with sweet-oil, leaving enough oil on to soak into the rust. Leave till next day, and then rub with unaltered lime till all rust is removed. Remember that if rust is allowed to eat very deeply into steel nothing will remove the marks, so always look over any steel articles that are not in constant use every month, and have them cleaned if necessary.

MIMI.—We are not certain that we know what recipe is referred to; for dry hair the best thing is washing it frequently with water containing some borax, or making a pomade with one ounce of borax to four of glycerine; rubbing that in at night to roots, and washing off in morning; for colorless hair discolored by long use of permanganate of potash in half-pint unsweetened strong tea, and rub or comb into the hair daily.

LOUIE.—To make mayonnaise sauce, beat the yolks of two eggs in an earthenware bowl, then stir one way only with a wooden spoon, adding pure olive oil drop by drop until nearly enough sauce is prepared; then by drop in two teaspoonfuls of vinegar to each quarter of a pint of oil, flavoured with a pinch each of salt and white pepper, and half a teaspoonful of made mustard. Lemon-juice or tarragon vinegar may be used instead of the ordinary vinegar if preferred.

TRAVELLER ONE.—A red nose may be due to a variety of causes, of which the most usual are indigestion, tight clothing of any description, especially corsets, and the use of tea. When due to the causes mentioned the cure is obvious; but there are conditions of the blood which give rise to it, and in such cases the advice of a physician should be sought; meanwhile, highly seasoned food and all kinds of fat and grease should be strictly avoided.

CONSTANT READER.—One lemon, loaf sugar, boiling water. Pare the rind of the lemon very thinly indeed, only the thinnest yellow part. Then cut away all the pith or white part, and slice the lemon thinly into a jug. Do not put in the seeds. Put in the yellow rind and perhaps two lumps of sugar, but that is only to be as the invalid likes. Pour boiling water over this, as much as two breakfast-cups. Cover the jug, and when cold strain into another jug for use.

MISST.—Use one pound of beef and one pint of water; with a sharp knife scrape the beef into fibres; this should be done on a board. Put the scraped meat into a clean saucepan, and pour one half-pint of boiling water over it; cover closely and set by the side of the fire for ten minutes, then strain into a teacup, place it in a basin of ice-cold water, remove all fat from the surface, pour into a warmed cup, and put in another basin of hot water; warm again, and serve.

VERY WORRIED.—If your memory is weak, do not overload it; read no more than you can properly understand, and see how it applies to things; do this one day, and the next morning, write a short summary of it before taking up your book again; or, as you read, and think, put down an occasional word which will afterwards recall the thought; then, by means of these words next day put all your thoughts into form; any system is better than no system in training the memory.

INTERESTED.—The greasing of the carriage was the excuse given by the rebellious Sepoys for their mutiny in India; the grease was pork fat, and it is an abomination for a Mahomedan to touch pork in any shape or form; in the days of the old muzzle-loader the point of the carriage had to be bitten off so that when the percussion cap exploded the powder would be directly under the nipple and explode also; the Sepoy had thus to bring the hateful grease into direct contact with his lips.

A HOUSEWIFE.—It may be prevented by trimming the wick daily. When burned for several evenings without trimming the wick becomes blackened, clogged, and incapable of supplying the oil clearly and uniformly, and the chimneys are sometimes filled with fumes and smoke. Some explosions would be prevented by never blowing out the lamp down the chimney, for, if the wick happens to be too small, the flame may be driven down into the oil. The best way is to trim it down low, and the light will go out itself.

ECONOMICAL.—You can economise by raising a little water, just enough to make it bind with any coal dust you have. Put this damp on the fire at any time of the day you do not want it to light up; put it down firmly with the kitchen shovel; make a hole or chimney through the top with a poker; this will keep the fire alive, and when you want it bright by and by, perhaps in two or three hours or more, just lift it gently with the poker from below, and if properly done you will have a splendid fire from the caked dust.

THE LONDON READER can be sent to any part of the world, post-free Three-halfpence Weekly; or Quarterly One Shilling and Eightpence. The yearly subscription for the Monthly Part, including Christmas Part, is Eight Shillings and Eightpence, post-free.

ALL BACK NUMBERS, PARTS and VOLUMES are in print, and may be had of any Bookseller.

NOTICE.—Part 474 is Now Ready, price Sixpence, post-free, Eightpence. Also Vol. LXXIII., bound in cloth, 4s. 6d.

THE INDEX to Vol. LXXIII. is now Ready; Price One Penny, post-free, Three-halfpence.

ALL LETTERS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON READER, 25, Catherine Street, Strand, W.C.

We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

London: Published by the Proprietor at 25, Catherine Street, Strand, and Printed by WOODFALL & KIDDER, Long Acre.



"No Better Food."—Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., &c.

"Cocoa, Sah!"



FRY'S Pure **COCOA**
Concentrated

275 Gold Medals and Diplomas.

N.B.—Ask SPECIALLY FOR "FRY'S PURE CONCENTRATED."



F. CHARLES REIN & SON,

Sole Inventors and Makers of the World-Renowned

AURAL INSTRUMENTS.

Nine Prize Medals.

TO BE HAD ONLY AT THE

PARADISE FOR THE DEAF,

108 & 108a, Strand, London,

AND AT 42 PRESTON STREET, BRIGHTON.

SULPHOLINE

Bottles
Sold
Everywhere.

The Cure for Skin Diseases, Eruptions,
Blotches, Eczema, Acne, Disfigure-
ments. Makes the Skin Clear, Smooth
Supple, Healthy.

LOTION

PEPPER'S

2s. 6d.
SOLD EVERYWHERE.
QUININE AND IRON

TONIC

GREAT BODILY STRENGTH!
GREAT NERVE STRENGTH!
GREAT MENTAL STRENGTH!
GREAT DIGESTIVE STRENGTH!

Promotes Appetite, Cures Dyspepsia,
Hysteria, Nervous Complaints, &c.

ZEBRA Grate Polish

No Hard Work.



THE
LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

PART 479. VOL. LXXVI.—JANUARY, 1901.

CONTENTS.

NOVELETTES.

	PAGE
LOVE'S DEVOTION	169
MARRION WOODS'S CLERK	241
MISS TABITHA'S MONEY	217
MR. TEMPLETON'S DAUGHTER	193

SERIAL STORIES.

FLOWER OF FATE	178, 201, 226, 249
GIVE HIM BACK TO ME	187, 209, 232, 257
VERNON'S DESTINY	181, 205, 229, 253

SHORT STORY.

	PAGE
AN OLD MAID'S MISTAKE	225

VARIETIES.

POETRY	191 215 239, 264
FACTS	189 213 237, 262
SOCIETY	190, 214, 238, 263
STATISTICS	190 214 238 263
GENS	190, 214 238, 263
HOUSEHOLD TREASURES	190, 214 238, 263
MISCELLANEOUS	190, 214 238 263
NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS	191, 215 239 264

PRICE SIXPENCE.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED AT THE OFFICE, 26, CATHERINE ST., STRAND.

AND OF ALL BOOKSELLERS.

FOR YOUTHFUL APPEARANCE.

BEAUTIFUL HAIR.

IMPERIAL HAIR DYES & C



ONE LIQUID.

- No. 1..Black
- No. 2..Dark Brown
- No. 3..Light Brown
- No. 4 { Golden Brown
or Auburn
- No. 5..Pure Golden
- No. 6 Imperial
Hair Grower

Harmless, Perfect,
Permanent & Odourless.

A Medical Certificate
with each bottle.



2/6, 3/6, 5/- & 10/6 (PRIVATELY PACKED).
J. BRODIE, 41 MUSEUM STREET, LONDON
Established 1868. Once Tried, Always Used.

Towle's

Pennyroyal Steel Pills

AND FEMALE

Quickly correct all irregularities, remove all obstructions, and relieve the distressing symptoms so prevalent with the sex.

Boxes 1s. 1/4d. & 2s. 9d. (the latter contains three times the quantity) of all Chemists. Sent anywhere on receipt of 15 or 34 stamps by E. T. Towle & Co., Manufacturers, Dryden Street, Nottingham.

Beware of imitations injurious & worthless!

FOR VACANT POSITIONS on this COVER

Apply—
ADVERTISMENT MANAGER,
28, Catherine Street, Strand, London. W.C.

AN OPTICAL ILLUSION!



SEE ME TAKE A

WHELPTON'S PILL.

Keep your eye on the pill, draw the picture gently towards you in a line with your face until the pill disappears in the monk's mouth.

THE BEST FAMILY MEDICINE.
THE BEST LIVER PILL.
THE BEST CURE FOR INDIGESTION.
BEST PREVENTIVE OF SEA SICKNESS.

7d., 1/11, and 2/9, of all Chemists.

Free by Post in the United Kingdom for 8, 14, or 33 Stamps.

G. WHELPTON & SON,
3, CRANE COURT, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.

Monkey Brand



"Mr. Kruger's Ultimatum is an
Unpolished Document."—
Vide Daily Press.

MAKES TIN LIKE SILVER.
COPPER LIKE GOLD.
WINDOWS LIKE CRYSTAL.
BRASSWARE LIKE MIRRORS.
CROCKERY LIKE MARBLE.
PAINT LIKE NEW.

THE WORLD'S MOST RAPID CLEANSER
AND POLISHER.

WILL DO A DAY'S WORK IN AN HOUR.

Won't Wash Clothes.

LEVER BROTHERS LIMITED,

PORT SUNLIGHT, CHESHIRE.

